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COMIC BOOK AR

No. 68
May 1999

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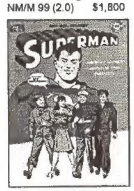

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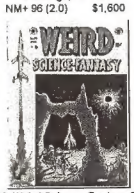

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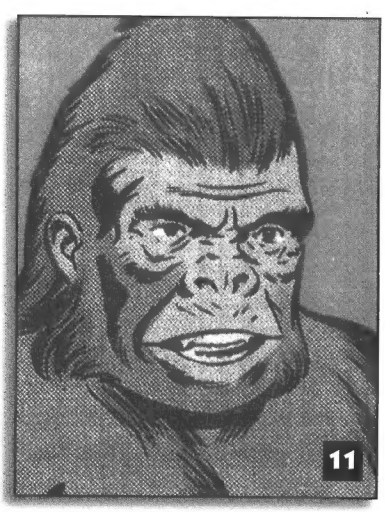

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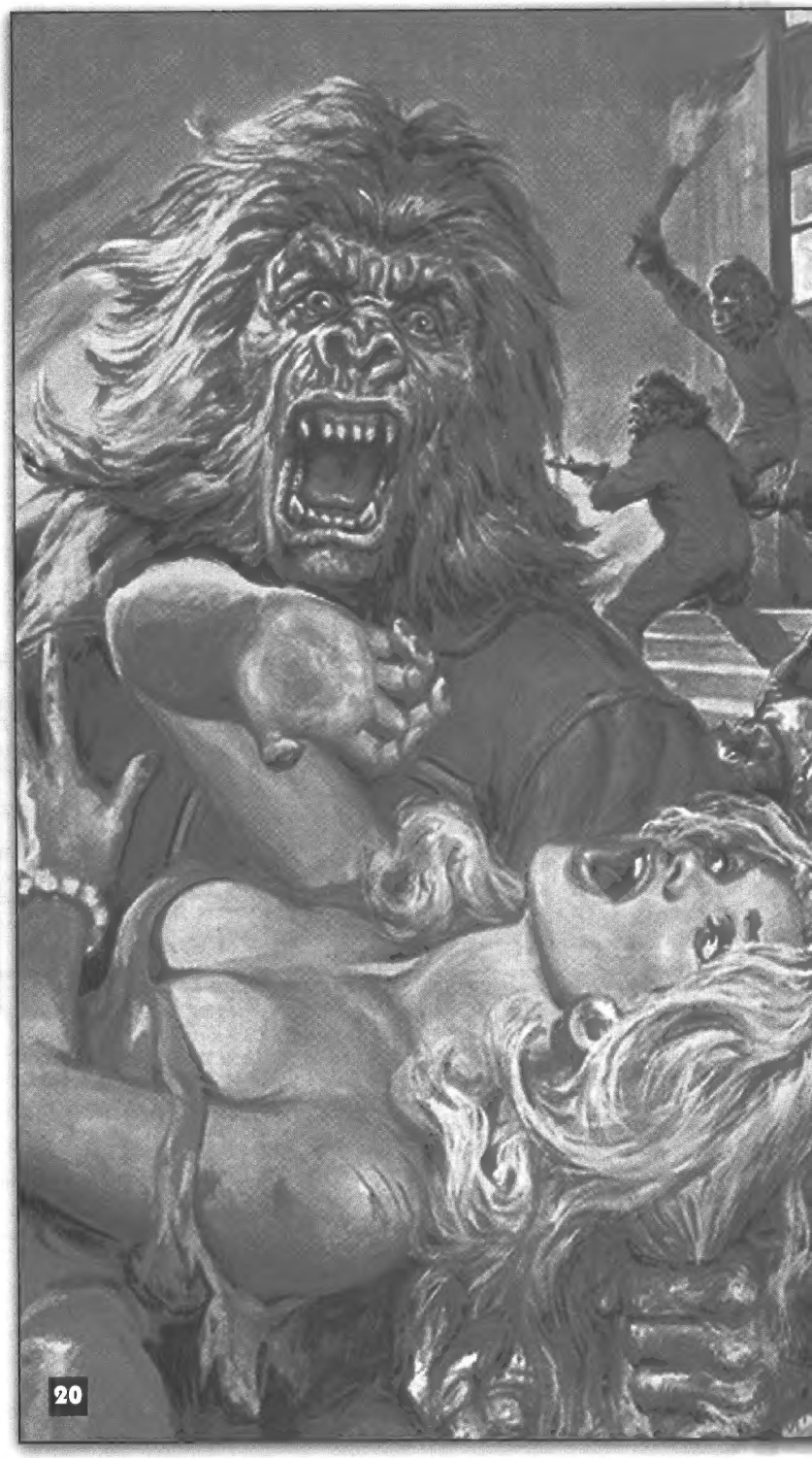

DC's Primate Directive

As many of you know, I started buying comics in the summer of 1956 and began collecting in earnest (at the tender age of nine) in 1958. I, like so many other kids across the country, was hypnotized by the covers of DC's six sci-fi/mystery titles. I purchased *House of Secrets, House of Mystery, My Greatest Adventure,* and *Unexpected* every chance I got, insatiably reading and rereading every issue until the corners were tattered, staples were loosened, and the spines were rolled and sprinkled with a generous helping of transverse spine creases. In short, my books were "well read" copies.

But the top dogs on my comic shopping list were *Strange Adventures* and *Mystery In Spaces* two now legendary titles edited by the inimitable architect of the Silver Age, Julie Schwartz.

Although there have been a sprinkling of simian covers on all the six sci-fi/mystery titles, Julie regularly got my attention at the stands by putting intelligent, talking (sometimes thinking) apes on numerous *Strange Adventures* covers.

Years before I was old enough to buy comic books on my own, Julie published the first of these classics, *Strange Adventures* #8 (May 1951) a great 52-pager that featured "Evolution Plus!" by Gardner Fox, "The incredible story of an ape with a human brian!"

There's been plenty of speculation about how the whole DC gorilla thing got started, so I called the inimitable and always-cordial Mr. Schwartz and asked him about these sensational simians. Here's what he said on Tuesday, March 16th, 1999:

"Irwin Donnenfeld asked me why *Strange Adventures* #8 had increased sales. So we got a copy and looked the magazine up and down… trying to figure out why it sold better than other issues. Finally I suggested that it must be the fact that the cover was drawn with an ape showing human-like behavior… in this case writing the famous 'Ruth… please believe me!' message in chalk on a small blackboard.

We put human-like apes on other covers through the years, primarily *Strange Adventures*, and in nearly every case sales went up. But eventually other publishers got the idea and they started using apes on their covers too. For a time, there were apes everywhere (*laughter*)… the stands were crowded with apes, so Irwin Donnenfeld eventually told me 'The new rule is, no more than one gorilla cover a month!' That's probably why Grodd, one of the best things we did, was not on the cover of *Flash* #106, 107, or 108."

In celebration of the fact that Julie Schwartz will be 84 on June 19th, 1999, and the legendary Grodd trilogy in *Flash* #106-108 will be 40 years old this year, I got to looking through my collection and pulled out a few interesting examples of DC simian covers for your perusal (pages 37-39 of this issue). As the years slip by, it's easy to see how future generations of comic collectors will look back to DC's sensational Silver Age simian covers as one of the more interesting, humorous, and memorable events in the evolution of 20th century collectibles.

Gary

SENSATIONAL SIMIANS… Memorable DC covers featuring Apes & Chimps…

Page 37: *Strange Adventures* #8 (May 1951, 52 Pages) "Evolution Plus!" by Gardner Fox, "The incredible story of an ape with a human brian!"; #32 (May 1953,) Captain Comet in "The Challenge of Man-Ape the Mighty!"; #39 (Dec 1953) Captain Comet exposes "The Guilty Gorilla!"; #45 (Jun 1954, pre-Code) "The Gorilla World!"; *Mystery In Space* #23 (Dec 1954/Jan 1955) "Monkey-Rocket to Mars!"; *Strange Adventures* #64 (Jan 1956, post-Code) "Gorillas In Space!"; *Tales Of The Unexpected* #2 (Apr/May 1956, post-Code) "The Gorilla Who Saved the World!"; *Strange Adventures* #69 (Jun 1956) "The Gorilla Conquest of Earth!"; and *House Of Mystery* #55 (Oct 1956) "The Amazing Cholly the Chimp!"

Page 38: *Strange Adventures* #75 (Dec 1956) "The Secret of the Man-Ape!"; *House Of Mystery* #58 (Jan 1957) "The Haunted Melody!"; *My Greatest Adventure* #14 (Mar/Apr 1957) "I Was Prisoner in a Human Zoo!"; *Tales Of The Unexpected* #14 (Jun 1957) "The Green Gorilla!"; *House Of Secrets* #6 (Sep/Oct 1957) "Experiment 1000!"; *Strange Adventures* #88 (Jan 1958) "The Gorilla War Against Earth!"; *House Of Secrets* #16 (Jan 1959) "We Matched Wits with a Gorilla Genius!"; *Strange Adventures* #100 (Jan 1959) "The Amazing Trial of John (Gorilla) Doe!"; and *Strange Adventures* #108 (Sep 1959) "The Human Pet of Gorilla Land!"

Page 39: *House Of Secrets* #26 (Nov 1959) "The Menace of the Alien Ape!"; *Strange Adventures* #117 (Jun 1960) "Challenge of the Gorilla Genius!"; *Strange Adventures* #125 (Feb 1961) "The Flying Gorilla Menace!"; *Brave & Bold* #49 (Aug/Sep 1963) "Gorilla Wonders of the Diamond!"; *Hawkman* #6 (Feb/Mar 1965) "The World Where Evolution Ran Wild!"; *Strange Adventures* #186 (Mar 1966) "Beware the Gorilla Witch!"; *Hawkman* #16 (Oct/Nov 1966) "Lord of the Flying Gorillas!"; and the little-known and incredible wraparound covers of *Mysteries In Space* by Michael Uslan, featuring Murphy Anderson's rendition of Adam Strange vs. flying gorillas. Not pictured: *Strange Adventures* #201 (Jun 1967) "Animal-Man battles "The Mod Gorilla Boss!"

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Fantastic Four	**7**	**VF**	**$470**
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Name on first page			
Justice League of America	**2**	**VF-**	**$675**
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Name stamp first page			
Showcase	**24**	**VF-**	**$675**
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Tales of Suspense	**39**	**VG/F**	**$675**
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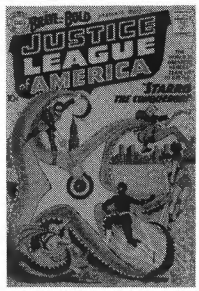

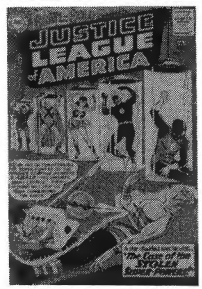

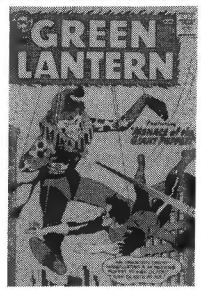

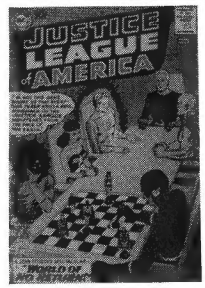

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Synchronic collection

Hats off to a great article on the synchronic collection. After reading it, I was all in a sweat to give the idea a try myself. I fixed on January, 1974 as my month, since that was the time I "discovered" comics as well, after getting a bunch of them for Christmas. BUT, I'm already discovering that my attempt to amass a list of titles may even by harder than author Steve Cooper's.

There is no Gerber guide for the Bronze Age, except for Marvel titles, and the various comic databases on the internet do not list by issue number or date. So, am I reduced to picking my way through 800 pages of Overstreet, or is there a faster way to find what titles were published in 1974? Thanks to CBM readers in advance for any advice on this.

Eric Martin, via E-mail

Superman #115

Hi there CBM, thanks for the nifty work on the Wayne Boring article in CBM #63.

Re: Steve Cooper's synchronic collection article... the month and year of my first superhero comic, Superman #115 (as best I can remember), was August 1957. I was 7 years old, and I remember buying the book at the suggestion of the newsstand clerk as a substitute for a comic that wasn't out that day—Mighty Mouse. So my parents let me have the Superman. I read it again and again and again and I was hooked. Before long, I was buying Action, and the Superboy titles, and World's Finest, and later the Batman titles.

I haven't done any great amount of research with my Gerber books, but a quick glance shows that August, 1957 also produced Action Comics #231 (I already own it—YES!) which was Wayne Boring's and Stan Kaye's last cover prior to the long string of Swan covers. The lead story was "Sir Jimmy Olsen, Knight of Metropolis." The current Detective Comics was #246, a Sheldon Moldoff cover featuring a great Batman whodunnit "Murder at Mystery Castle." What a great month it must have been.

Superman #115 featured three excellent stories, including one of the most unusual Superman tales ever published. As far as I know, none of the stories in this book has ever been reprinted. Some day, I may attempt a short article about this seminal issue.

I've also just begun to read through my copy of the new World's Finest Archives. WF has always been a favorite title, though some of the pencil and ink combinations have left me puzzled. If the new information revealed in this book is accurate, it provides a lot of answers as to who was inking Swan and Sprang in those halcyon days. Thanks for an enjoyable issue—and thanks to Steve Cooper for a marvelous idea.

Lynn Woolley, via E-mail

Ramona Fradon please

Guess this should be directed to Gary Carter, CBM's editor. I truly enjoy the issues of CBM I've been able to find. A very classy mag, thorough and respectful of the subject matter, and I thank you for it, but I have a question for you. Has CBM ever done an interview with Metamorpho (and Aquaman) artist Ramona Fradon? If so, could you tell me in which issue it appeared so I can track it down? If not, what are you waiting for?

As one of very few women working in the Silver Age of comics as a freelancer, Ms. Fradon has a unique and valid perspective on what went on. Her insights add another dimension to the history of the Silver Age, and until they are properly recorded that history remains incomplete, to my mind.

If you have not already done so, I truly hope you seriously consider getting an interview with this extraordinarily talented lady.

John Arcudi, via E-mail

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Elsa the Ape-Girl

Enjoyed the latest CBM (as usual). Your feature on the Women of the Spirit reminded me of an interesting anecdote that Will Eisner related to me at last year's San Diego Con. I asked him to autograph a 1940 Spirit section featuring Elsa the Ape-Girl (one of the women featured in your article). The splash panel showed a scantily clad Elsa posed languidly next to a gorilla clad in a pin-striped suit. Mr. Eisner mentioned that that particular issue had drawn complaints from certain Deep South newspapers claiming that he was promoting miscegenation! I asked him what his response to that was. As you might expect, it was succinct, colorful, and unprintable!

Meeting Will Eisner is always a highlight of San Diego—let's hope the demise of Kitchen Sink doesn't mean he won't be back this year. Thanks again.

Chris Gage, via E-mail

Please help!

I'm a bit upset with you guys. Why? Because you told us about the publication of The Guide #2, but you didn't say how or where to get a copy! Now it seems that The Guide #2 is already out and I still don't know how to get a copy! I'm not able to get to a comic shop, I have to do everything by mail. I've been faithful to and relying upon Overstreet since 1986. Please help! Tell me where to write and how much money to send for a copy.

Sterling Dashiell, Virginia

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Larger than life robot

You may remember my comments around last May re: Please reprint the Matt Baker article in CBM #25. Well I've watched for it as advised (and yes, I've ordered via my retailer, the Best of CBM #22-24) but still want the info contained in CBM #25.

On another note, about 20 months back Michelle Nolan encouraged CBM readers to tell about our favourite comic book—at that time I wasn't sure which one above all was my favourite...

The answer became more clear some time later. My favourite has to be Planet #48 because as a 12-year-old I clearly remember that larger than life robot. But because I couldn't afford it, I had to wait 50 years to gewt it! When I finally did, the feeling for two months was pure joy!

Shifting again, I'm beginning to experience difficulty reading the small size of print in Overstreet. Perhaps if they omitted the b&w reproductions from the top and/or changed the format to allow larger print it would be more comfortable to read. Please ask Gemstone Maryland to give this suggestion their earnest consideration.

My favourite articles since I joined up with CBM (I started with #43) are the reprint of the Neal Adams article, the 3-part Julius Schwartz issues, the Nick Cardy interview, the Planet Comics article and photo gallery, the development of the early history of DC comics, and most recently the 18-page Stan Lee article.

'Til we "meet" again. Yours warmly,

George Stockdale, NSW, Australia

The article from CBM #25 is scheduled for reprint in CBM Special Edition #3 which will be published at the end of the year. As for the small print in The Overstreet Annual, I know the editoral staff does a miraculous job getting a massive amount a data and graphics into a limited number of pages. Regrettably, one of the sacrifices that has to be made is smaller type. I find the small print tough on my eyes too... but I prefer it to having to cart around two volumes. Thanks for writing George, it was great to hear from you again... and thanks for being such a loyal Gemstone reader.

Mark Evanier

Kevin and I would like to thank you for your first class presentation of our Mark Evanier piece in CBM #67. One small error however and totally my fault: Super Goof #27 actually contained Mark's first written—not first published, American script. His first published American work was "The Hot Ice Cream Man" in The Amazing Chan and the Chan Clan #1 earlier in 1973.

Bob Brodsky, California

My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time, I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from CBM readers all over the world. You're all part of the "CBM family" now, and your opinion counts! I hope you'll write or FAX soon! Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications to: CBM Marketplace Mail, PO Box 180700, Coronado, CA 92178 or E-Mail us at cbm@gemstonepub.com

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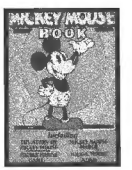

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By Pat S. Calhoun

Painted Quartet... circa 1952!

Painted covers are among the primary joys of many books, pulps, and paperbacks, and painted covers on comic books reinforce their kinship to their literary brethren. There is a current renaissance in the creation and appreciation of painted comic covers, which makes good reason to fire up the retro rockets and take a look at a previous heyday of this swelegant style with four incredible painted covers from the great comic book boom year of 1952.

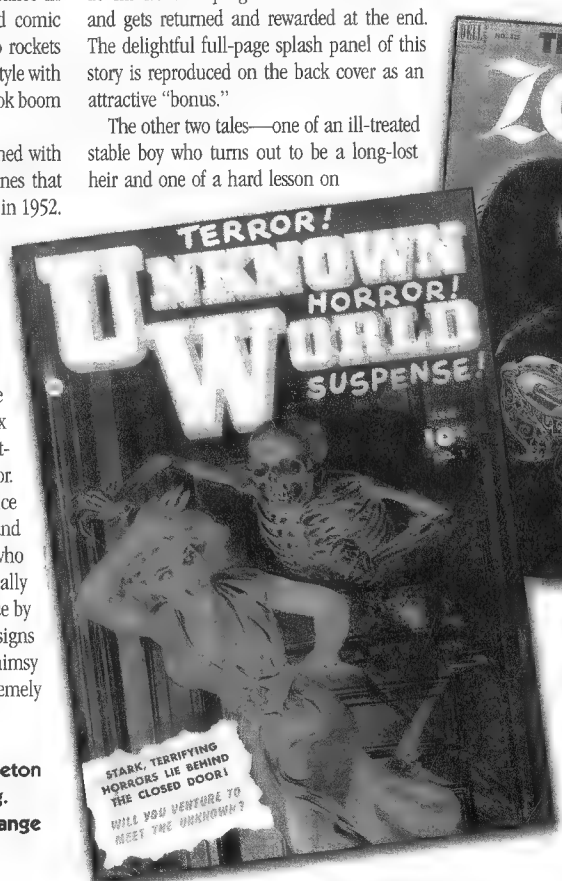
1952 wasn't the first time that comics were published with painted covers, but there sure were plenty of good ones that year. Of course there were plenty of all kinds of comics in 1952.

Uncle Charlie's Fables #1 (January 1952) contributes a light touch to our gallery, featuring concept and cover art by the prolific and multi-talented Charles Biro: vivid artist, creator of immortal characters like Iron Jaw and Airboy, and writer of many of the great Golden Age yarns with a character-driven, emotion-packed narrative that always delivered excitement. The utterly charming cover is complemented by a lively mix of historical farces and fairy tales: focusing on the mostly-mythical era of kings and castles and knights in armor.

"Peter Pester" tells of a young kitchen apprentice who accidentally pours a bucket of tar over the king and only escapes execution by the graces of the Princess who unlocks his cell door and sets him free. The lad finally wins the king's favor and astounds the castle populace by fulfilling the three "impossible" tasks the King assigns him to win freedom. Maximum doses of wit and whimsy plus pleasing art by Hy Mankin add up to an extremely enjoyable ten-pager.

A more moralistic approach pervades "Janice and the Lazy Giant," about a little girl whose room is always a mess until she gets kidnapped by an even-sloppier giant who makes her do his housekeeping! She learns her lesson and gets returned and rewarded at the end. The delightful full-page splash panel of this story is reproduced on the back cover as an attractive "bonus."

The other two tales—one of an ill-treated stable boy who turns out to be a long-lost heir and one of a hard lesson on



The luminous transparency of the ghost skeleton on Unknown World #1 (Jun 1952) is amazing. The four issues that followed were titled Strange Stories From Another World... all featuring painted covers.

The intense swordfight scene used on FC #425 (Return of Zorro, Sep 1952) offers a powerful portrait of the great costumed hero of Old California.

the fruits of selfishness—round out the book with filler, but all together it makes a colorful package. The title, published by Lev Gleason, managed a five-issue run, all with handsome painted Biro covers.

Unknown World #1 (June 1952) is a dynamite horror comic from Fawcett with three outstanding stories and a tremendous painted cover by Norman Saunders, artist on so many fantastic pulp and paperback covers as well as painter of the legendary *Mars Attacks* gum cards. The three ten-page stories make a well-balanced interior, and the longer length (most horror comics used a four or five story format) makes for nicely elaborated entertainment.

"The Sea of the Dead," moodily rendered by Sheldon Moldoff, is a classic "captain who deserted sinking ship faces supernatural retribution from undersea ghosts" yarn—'nuff said.

"The Serpent Queen" is superbly drawn by Bob McCarty, a master of lurid storytelling. This "lost race" extravaganza takes place in remote South America where two white explorers seek a missing colleague whose final message contained ravings about a beautiful serpent queen ruling a hidden tribe. One takes the map and follows the trail and ravings become reality when he's captured by the elusive natives.

When he lifts the veil that hides the lovely Queen's face he sees the nightmare of black magic that has allowed her to live for 2000 years as he meets his doom. It's fun and has a clever twist at the end.

"Footprints on the Ceiling" tells of an imprisoned criminal circus acrobat who escapes but gets bitten by a bloodhound and lamed enough to end his career. Since his escape partner is a veterinarian he joins him in starting a pet hospital but burns down their kennel one night hoping to collect the insurance money and seeking vengeance against "the dogs that lamed him." Of course, later, a ghost-dog gets its revenge...

"The Return of Zorro" (*Four Color* #425, September 1952) is the second issue of Dell's one-shot series to feature the swashbuckling swordsman of Old California. And it's the best of the Zorro issues. This has the feel of being adapted from one of Johnston McCulley's original novels of the masked hero but isn't stated explicitly. Still, it's a compelling and perfectly-paced tale that builds to a smooth climax with Zorro fighting a criminal who plans to force the governor of California to sign papers turning over ranches to him by holding the governor at gunpoint while disguised as Zorro. And the villain is also pitted against Zorro's alter-ego, Don Diego Vega, as a rival for the hand of Panchita Conchola.

This is a rousing 34-page novel—with the last two pages (the penultimate in black and white and the finale in glorious and glossy color) on the back covers. Throw in the terrific painted swordfight cover and the fact page on swords on the inside front cover and you have a superb example of Dell's unbeatable format. All of the early *Four Color* Zorros are worthwhile books, but this one gets high (and well deserved) praise.

Strange Terrors #5 (December 1952) boasts a unique painted cover that looks like something from the 16th century. Kudos to George Mayerriecks for creating this atmospheric image of good and evil in their archetypal roles of hero and devil. Of the seven-issue *Strange Terrors* run—#3 has another Mayerriecks painted classic cover and #4's cover is a psychedelic stunner painted by William Ekgren.

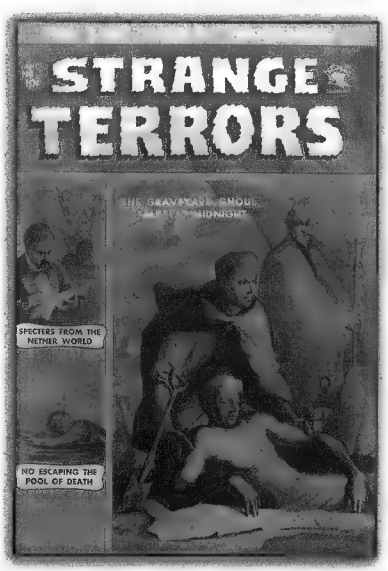
Unfortunately the inside stories fall a bit short. The difference between good stories and not-so-good stories is the difference between a memorable and moving comic book and a forgettable one. Joe Kubert makes a valiant attempt to inject life into the opening story with his stylish rendering but can't surmount the less-than-thrilling script.

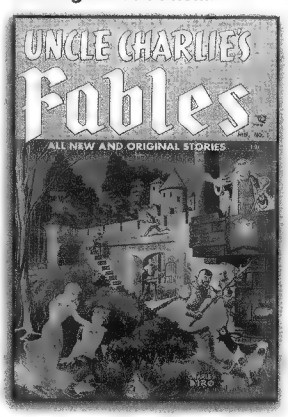
The same goes for the Viking weirdie that comes next. It's not bad, an effortless enough page-turner, but it lacks drive, and the suspense falters. "Mirror Image" is an almost-satisfying story of a magician's assistant who is goaded by an evil face he sees in the mirror into killing his boss and taking over the act.

And "Curse of the Chateau Rouge," takes its ghost story plot through all its paces but lacks pizzazz. Still, there are many comics—even from the hallowed year of 1952—that make four so-so stories a fair enough showing, and that awesomely anachronistic cover calls on the traditions of illustrative art and history to summon a supreme creepiness.

Another aspect of the painted comic covers of 1952 is that the different colors and textures made the books stand out on the crowded sales racks... and thus a little more likely to attract a customer's interest. And, as these four covers show, the best of them continue to exert a special fascination on collectors searching for the finest offerings of the four-color form.

In addition to painting the cover of and writing the stories in Uncle Charlie's Fables #1 (Jan 1952), "Uncle" Charles Biro posed with some kids while storytelling for a photo on the inside front cover.





George Mayerriecks achieved a genuine antique look on the cover of Strange Terrors #5 (Dec 1952) including the wood grain at bottom.

By Michelle Nolan

Jungle Gem!

DC monkeyed around with Congo Bill and created one of the strangest heroes of the Silver Age!

The second version of Green Lantern was not the only character with a magic ring introduced by DC Comics at the dawn of the Silver Age in 1959. Unlike Green Lantern, however, Congorilla, was something of an acquired taste. I'd have to nominate the Golden Gorilla as one of the most bizarre character concepts in DC's long history.

When Ye Editor asked me to do a column on Congorilla, I had not read a Congorilla story in nearly 38 years, or since his last Silver Age strip in 1961.

In fact, to be honest, I could not even remember reading one at all, although I'm sure I did, since I faithfully bought all the issues of *Action Comics* and *Adventure Comics* in which he appeared.

The funny thing is, however, that Congorilla actually reads better today—providing you can suspend your disbelief—than most of the adventures of his alter-ego, the long-running Congo Bill.

Think about it for a minute: Congorilla's last appearance in the Silver Age came in the same year in which Marvel's Fantastic Four made its debut. That says a lot about the changes occurring in comics at the time.

Before going into Congorilla's history, any who are totally unfamiliar with the character... should be warned. This column is about an old-fashioned jungle hero who, when he rubbed a magic ring three times, exchanged his mind with that of a magnificent Golden Gorilla.

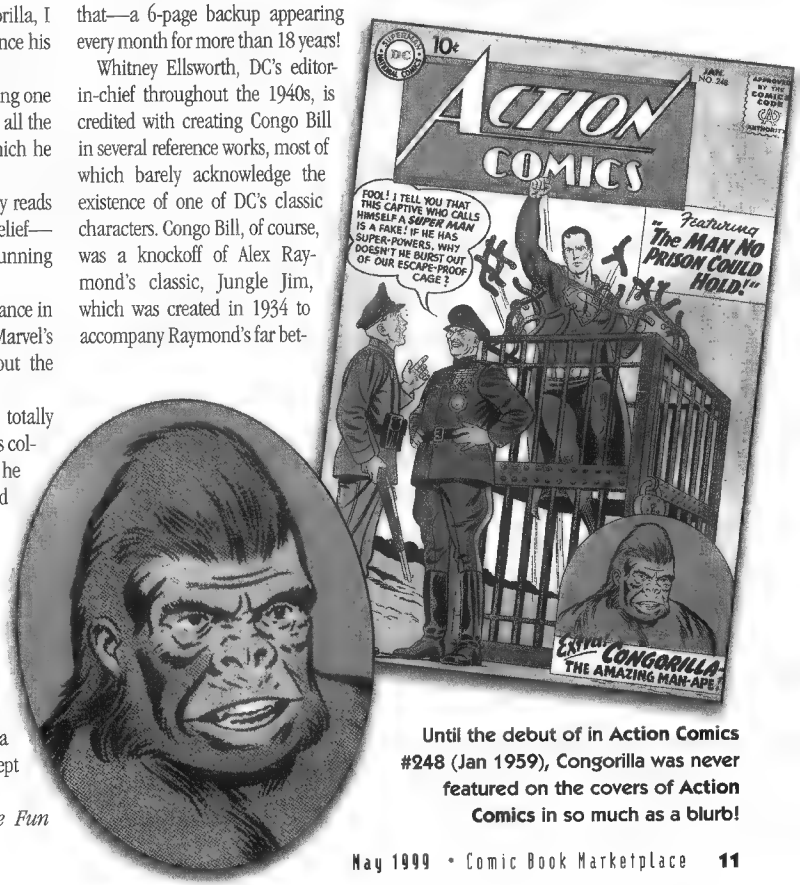
Edgar Rice Burroughs, eat your heart out! Has there ever been a more fantastic jungle concept? (Actually, there were several such gorilla fantasies in the pulp magazines, some of which may have inspired Congorilla.)

Most collectors are at least vaguely familiar with Congo Bill. But even many DC enthusiasts may not realize that by the end of 1958, Congo Bill had enjoyed a continuous run longer than any DC character except Superman and Batman!

That's correct. Congo Bill first appeared in *More Fun Comics* #56 (June 1940) for one year through #67 (May 1941) before switching over to *Action Comics* with #37 (June 1941). Congo Bill appeared in every issue of *Action* through #247 (December 1958) except for #93 (February 1946), in which his appearance was sacrificed to make room for a 16-page Superman story.

Almost all of the Congo Bill stories were 6-pagers. Imagine that—a 6-page backup appearing every month for more than 18 years!

Whitney Ellsworth, DC's editor-in-chief throughout the 1940s, is credited with creating Congo Bill in several reference works, most of which barely acknowledge the existence of one of DC's classic characters. Congo Bill, of course, was a knockoff of Alex Raymond's classic, Jungle Jim, which was created in 1934 to accompany Raymond's far bet-


10¢
ACTION COMICS
JAN. NO. 248
FOOL! I TELL YOU THAT THIS CAPTIVE WHO CALLS HIMSELF A SUPER MAN IS A FAKE! IF HE HAS SUPER-POWERS, WHY DOESN'T HE BURST OUT OF OUR ESCAPE-PROOF CAGE?
Featuring The MAN NO PRISON COULD HOLD!"
CONGORILLA
THE AMAZING MAN-APE!

Until the debut of in Action Comics #248 (Jan 1959), Congorilla was never featured on the covers of Action Comics in so much as a blurb!

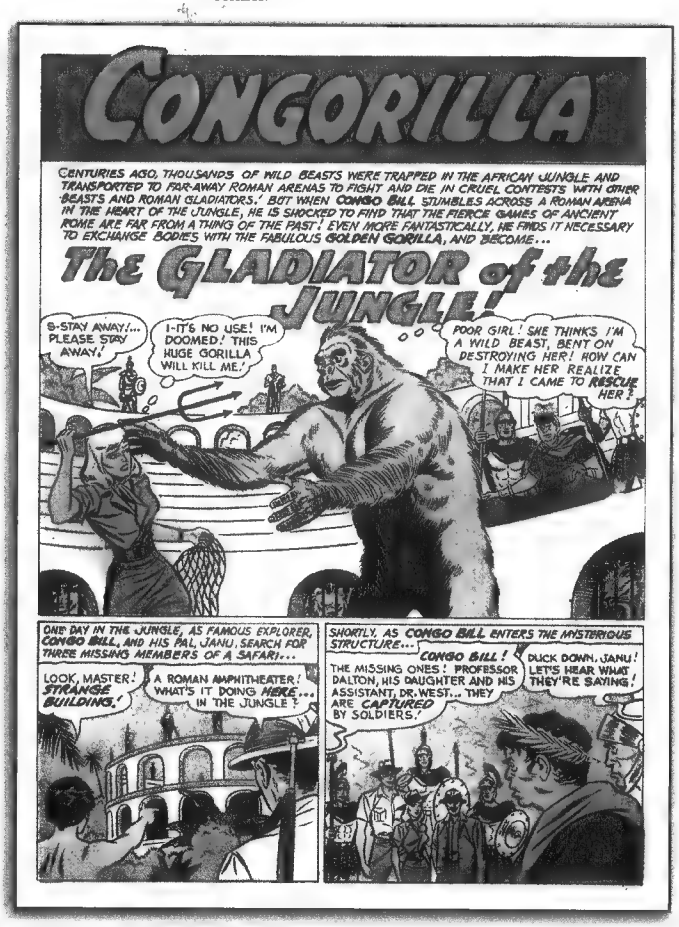
ter known creation, Flash Gordon, on the Sunday comic pages.

Except for a 7-issue run of his own DC title in 1954-55, Congo Bill was never more than a backup character. Until the debut of Congorilla in *Action Comics* #248 (January 1959), Congo Bill was never featured on the covers of *Action Comics* in so much as a blurb! (One minor exception of note... *Action* #52 includes Congo Bill in the quintet of heroes racing at you on the cover.)

Congo Bill was, however, the subject of a long-forgotten 15-chapter Columbia serial in 1948 starring Don McGuire in his only serial appearance. McGuire went on to write screenplays and directed several Jerry Lewis films along with the classic Spencer Tracy vehicle in 1954, *Bad Day at Black Rock*.

Columbia, of course, was well-known for using comic strip characters in its serials, including Superman, Batman and Blackhawk. Interestingly, Columbia also used two other DC backup characters in serials—The Vigilante (1947) from *Action Comics* and Hop Harrigan (1946) from *All-American* comics.

The splash page from "The Gladiator of the Jungle!" in Action #260 (Jan 1960).


CONGORILLA
CENTURIES AGO, THOUSANDS OF WILD BEASTS WERE TRAPPED IN THE AFRICAN JUNGLE AND TRANSPORTED TO FAR-AWAY ROMAN ARENAS TO FIGHT AND DIE IN CRUEL CONTESTS WITH OTHER BEASTS AND ROMAN GLADIATORS. BUT WHEN CONGO BILL STUMBLES ACROSS A ROMAN ARENA IN THE HEART OF THE JUNGLE, HE IS SHOCKED TO FIND THAT THE FIERCE GAMES OF ANCIENT ROME ARE FAR FROM A THING OF THE PAST! EVEN MORE FANTASTICALLY, HE FINDS IT NECESSARY TO EXCHANGE BODIES WITH THE FABULOUS GOLDEN GORILLA, AND BECOME...
The GLADIATOR of the JUNGLE!
S-STAY AWAY!... PLEASE STAY AWAY!
I-IT'S NO USE! I'M DOOMED! THIS HUGE GORILLA WILL KILL ME!
POOR GIRL! SHE THINKS I'M A WILD BEAST, BENT ON DESTROYING HER! HOW CAN I MAKE HER REALIZE THAT I CAME TO RESCUE HER?
ONE DAY IN THE JUNGLE, AS FAMOUS EXPLORER, CONGO BILL, AND HIS PAL, JANU, SEARCH FOR THREE MISSING MEMBERS OF A SAFARI...
LOOK, MASTER! STRANGE BUILDING!
A ROMAN AMPHITHEATER! WHAT'S IT DOING HERE... IN THE JUNGLE?
SHORTLY, AS CONGO BILL ENTERS THE MYSTERIOUS STRUCTURE...
CONGO BILL!
THE MISSING ONES! PROFESSOR DALTON, HIS DAUGHTER AND HIS ASSISTANT, DR. WEST... THEY ARE CAPTURED BY SOLDIERS.
DUCK DOWN, JANU! LET'S HEAR WHAT THEY'RE SAYING!

By the way, I've seen more than 100 complete serials and chapters from others, but for some reason I've never had the opportunity to view the *Congo Bill*, *Vigilante* or *Hop Harrigan* serials. In this video age, maybe I just haven't looked hard enough but I'm still hoping they may be released on video tape someday. It's probably just as well though—in his 1977 book on serials, *Cliffhanger*, Alan Barbour writes that the *Congo Bill* serial "looked as though it had been filmed in somebody's back yard."

Congo Bill, then, probably lasted as long as he did in *Action Comics* because of the pop cultural influence of three much better known jungle characters featured on the potted palm-circuit either in films or on television—Jungle Jim, Ramar of the Jungle, and Bomba the Jungle Boy.

Jungle Jim first appeared on the screen in a 1937 Universal serial starring the forgotten Grant Withers. After the end of Johnny Weissmuller's memorable 16-year feature film run as Tarzan, Columbia "B" film and serial producer Sam Katzman signed the older but still serviceable Weissmuller for a series of Jungle Jim movies. That Columbia series ran 16 films from 1948 through 1955 before Weissmuller's version of Jungle Jim became a syndicated television series beginning in the fall of 1955.

Ramar of the Jungle, a character created for a syndicated television show, debuted in 1952 and ran throughout the 1950s. The television popularity of *Ramar* probably influenced DC Comics to give Congo Bill his own comic book, because the last issue of *Congo Bill* (#7, August/September 1955) hit the stands several months before the debut of the *Jungle Jim* television show. If DC had waited for a few more months instead of canceling *Congo Bill,* the title might have enjoyed a surge in sales, much as Dell's *Jungle Jim* comic book did. The Dell title lasted until 1959.

As for the influence of Bomba the Jungle Boy... Congo Bill's sidekick, Janu the Jungle Boy, was introduced in *Action Comics* #191 (April 1954), with the Janu logo beginning in #196 (September 1954). The "Janu" addition to the logo ran throughout the rest of the *Congo Bill* strip except for the story in #197, which may have been prepared before the story in #196.

Neither Ramar, Jungle Jim, nor their female peer on mid-1950's television, Sheena, had a juvenile sidekick. Janu's appearance, then, probably was a direct result of the popularity of the *Bomba the Jungle Boy* films. They starred Johnny Sheffield, who played the role of Boy in many of Weissmuller's Tarzan films. Sheffield, who was 17 when he began to play Bomba in 1948 for Monogram Pictures, played the character in 12 Bomba films through 1955.

Bomba was created by the Stratemeyer Syndicate in 1926 for a long-running children's book series authored by Roy Rockwood, a house pseudonym.

It was no coincidence that all of the "serious" jungle characters (except the amazingly adaptable Tarzan, of course) were

on their way out on television and in comic books by the end of the 1950s. "B" films and television had been giving a grossly distorted picture of Africa for years by the time independent nations such as Ghana (the former Gold Coast) began emerging in the 1950s. And when a widely publicized war broke out in the newly independent Republic of the Congo in 1960—complete with news clips of natives fighting with rifles, not spears—there was no longer room for stereotyped views of Africa.

The *Sheena* television shows are still fun to watch for the striking portrayal of the Queen of the Jungle by six-foot amazon Irish McCalla, who may have been the closest human ever to the actual appearance of a comic book character! The *Jungle Jim* shows, rarely seen today, are passable because of Weissmuller's portrayal and quasi-decent production values. However, the *Ramar* series, in which the otherwise respectable veteran film actor Jon Hall played the lead, is so bad it's almost painful to watch today. I thought it was bad in the 1950s!

At any rate, the DC folks were doubtless aware that Congo Bill had seen his best days by 1958. But what to do with such a long-running character?

The introduction of Janu in 1954 was DC's first attempt to jazz up the strip. Then came some wildly fanciful stories in the post-Sputnik DC tradition. There were 1958 Congo Bill stories with titles like "The Safari from Space" in *Action* #242, "The Five from the Future" in #243, "The Riddle of the Roc" in #244, "The Secret of the Super Animals" in #245 and "Riddle of the Super Zoo" in #247.

Those bizarre titles, though, were only a prelude to the introduction of the Golden Gorilla in *Action* #248 in the story entitled "The Amazing Congorilla!"

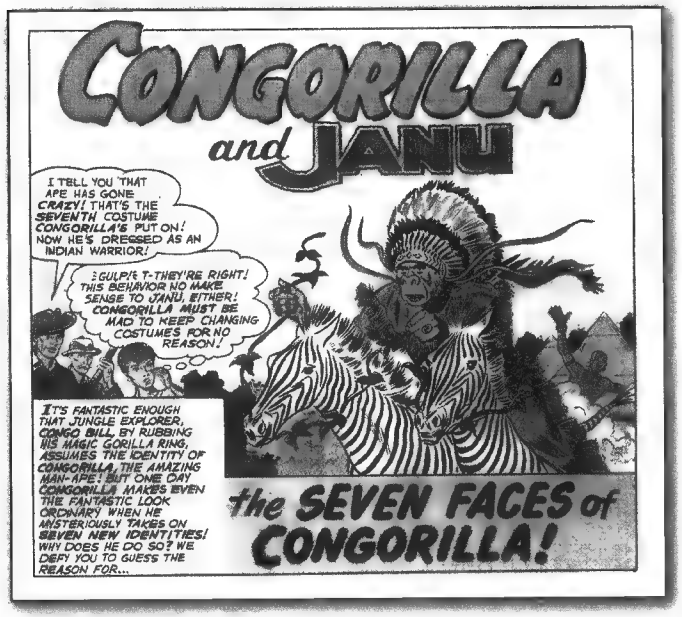
But wait... there were two Congorilla prototype stories, too! (See, you are always rewarded with little nuggets like this if you stay with Nolan's Notebook long enough!)

Action Comics #224 (January 1957) featured a Congo Bill story entitled "The Golden Gorilla!" This was followed in #228 (May 1957) by a "Kongorilla" (sic) tale entitled "The Gorilla King of the Jungle!"

The Golden Gorilla saved Congo Bill's life three times in his debut in *Action* #224. The first time, amusingly, Congo Bill exclaims "Thanks, Pal! You're what I call a friend in need!" when he should have said "a friend indeed!"

In *Action* #228, Kongorilla (not a Golden Gorilla, by the by) was an animal film star who was being retired to the jungle by Congo Bill. Our intrepid jungle hero also proved in this story that rumors of Kongorilla's human intelligence were just a hoax! Ah, but 20 issues later...

...Congorilla emerged for good in *Action Comics* #248, complete with the long-established Congo Bill logo changed to Congorilla. In this story, a dying witch doctor gave a magic ring to Congo Bill, telling him that he and the local god, a Golden Gorilla, could have their minds switched for one hour! Throughout the series, this led too numerous amusing scenes


CONGORILLA and JANU
I TELL YOU THAT APE HAS GONE CRAZY! THAT'S THE SEVENTH COSTUME CONGORILLA'S PUT ON! NOW HE'S DRESSED AS AN INDIAN WARRIOR!
GULP! I-THEY'RE RIGHT! THIS BEHAVIOR NO MAKE SENSE TO JANU, EITHER! CONGORILLA MUST BE MAD TO KEEP CHANGING COSTUMES FOR NO REASON!
IT'S FANTASTIC ENOUGH THAT JUNGLE EXPLORER, CONGO BILL, BY RUBBING HIS MAGIC GORILLA RING, ASSUMES THE IDENTITY OF CONGORILLA, THE AMAZING MAN-APE! BUT ONE DAY CONGORILLA MAKES EVEN THE FANTASTIC LOOK ORDINARY WHEN HE MYSTERIOUSLY TAKES ON SEVEN NEW IDENTITIES! WHY DOES HE DO SO? WE DEFY YOU TO GUESS THE REASON FOR...
the SEVEN FACES of CONGORILLA!

From the sublime... to the ridiculous? "The Seven Faces of Congorilla!" from Adventure #280 (Jan 1961).

CBM CONGORILLA CHECKLIST

CONGORILLA IN ACTION COMICS

#248 (Jan 1959) "The Amazing Congorilla!"
#249 (Feb 1959) "The Man-Ape's Mountain Mission!"
#250 (Mar 1959) "The Dunce of the Jungle!"
#251 (Apr 1959) "Congorilla, Outlaw!"
#252 (May 1959) "Congo Bill Dies at Dawn!"
#253 (Jun 1959) "The Destroyer of Congo Bill!"
#254 (Jul 1959) "Congorilla Goes Wild!"
#255 (Aug 1959) "The Abominable Snowman!"
#256 (Sep 1959) "Janu, the Joker of the Jungle!"
#257 (Oct 1959) "The Man-Ape Skin Diver!"
#258 (Nov 1959) "Congorilla Goes to War!"
#259 (Dec 1959) "The One-Ape Circus!"
#260 (Jan 1960) "The Gladiator of the Jungle!"
#261 (Feb 1960) "Congorilla's Last Stand!"

CONGORILLA IN ADVENTURE COMICS

#270 (Mar 1960) "The Ninth Wonder!"
#271 (Apr 1960) "The Son of Congorilla!"
#272 (May 1960) "The Strong Boy of the Jungle!"
#273 (Jun 1960) "Congorilla's Twin!"
#274 (Jul 1960) "The Revenge of the River Demon!"
#275 (Aug 1960) "Champion of the World!"
#276 (Sep 1960) "The Congorilla of Space!"
#277 (Oct 1960) "The Man-Ape's Mercy Mission!"
#278 (Nov 1960) "Janu of the Apes!"
#279 (Dec 1960) "The Sacrifice of Congorilla!"
#280 (Jan 1961) "The Seven Faces of Congorilla!"
#281 (Feb 1961) "The Lost Magic Ring!"
#283 (Apr 1961) "The Lion With the Double Identity!"

of Congo Bill being tied up or drugged to prevent the gorilla mind in his body from running amok!

Congorilla ran in 14 stories in *Action* through #261 (February 1960). When Supergirl, who was introduced in #252, had her stories expanded to 12-pagers with *Action* #262, Congorilla was shifted to *Adventure Comics* with #270 (March

"The Congorilla of Space!" (Adventure #276, Sep 1960) is one of the most amazing... and wacky... stories in DC sci-fi history! In it, the Golden Gorilla meets his alter-ego and is pitted against bizarre interplanetary foes.

CONGORILLA
IMAGINE CONGORILLA, THE LEGENDARY, AMAZING MAN-APE OF THE CONGO, SUDDENLY TRANSPLANTED TO A JUNGLE IN ANOTHER WORLD! HOW EFFECTIVE WOULD HIS IMMENSE STRENGTH AND CUNNING BE WHEN PITTED AGAINST FEROCIOUS FOES ON ANOTHER PLANET? LEARN THE SHOCKING ANSWER WHEN, ASTONISHINGLY, THE GORILLA PROTECTOR OF THE AFRICAN JUNGLE BECOMES...
The CONGORILLA of SPACE!
MY ALIEN ENEMIES SENT OUT AN ELECTRONIC EYE TO PURSUE ME! IF ITS FIERY RAY HITS ME, I'M A GONER!
ONE DAY, IN THE AFRICAN JUNGLE, AS EXPLORER CONGO BILL AND HIS YOUNG ASSISTANT, JANU, ENTER A CLEARING...
BUT...! GASP!...
LOOK, CONGO BILL! GOLDEN GORILLA... GOING AHEAD!
HE'S BEING ZEROED IN BY BEAMS OF COLORED LIGHT COMING OUT OF NOWHERE!
SECONDS AFTER...
LEAPING LEOPARDS! THE APE IS STRUGGLING HELPLESSLY... AS IF HE WERE IMPRISONED WITHIN THE STRANGE BEAMS OF COLORED LIGHT!

1960). Congorilla ran continuously through *Adventure* #281 (February 1961), the issue in which he appeared in a special 13-page story, and he also appeared in at least a couple of issues of *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*.

DC's editors promised that Congorilla would alternate with Aquaman in full-length stories, so Congorilla did not appear in *Adventure* #282. He reappeared in another long story in *Adventure* #283 (April 1961). But that was to be the last Congorilla story of the early Silver Age, since DC sacrificed him to make room for its Bizarro World series beginning in *Adventure* #285.

There isn't room to review all of the Congorilla stories in Action and *Adventure*, but suffice to say some of them were amusing, to say the least. I've listed all the titles in order to provide the flavor of the series.

I loved the Congorilla story in *Adventure* #280 (January 1961), "The Seven Faces of Congorilla!" In this tale, the Golden Gorilla acts out a fairy tale and wears the costumes of a rich man, a poor man, a beggar man, a thief (pirate), a doctor, a lawyer, and an Indian chief!

I also got a special kick out of three other Congorilla stories—"The One-Ape Circus!" in *Action* #259 (December 1959), "The Gladiator of the Jungle!" in *Action* #260 (January 1960), and "The Congorilla of Space!" in *Adventure* #276 (September 1960). In the third story, Congorilla meets his alter-ego on another planet. There was simply no end to the wacky story ideas DC came up with in those years!

Editor Mort Weisinger (or whoever was responsible for his earliest letters columns) also had a couple of smart-aleck answers for readers' serious inquiries. I assume all those readers' names were real, since I had a half-dozen letters printed in those days.

In *Adventure* #278 (November 1960), in answer to a reader who wondered why Congorilla could not speak English when he had switched minds with Congo Bill, the reply was: "Give us some time to ask anthropologists whether a gorilla's larynx can possibly project human vocal sounds and we'll report the answer to you."

Amazing! In other words, it's OK to believe in the magic that created Congorilla, but we must be realistic about a gorilla's vocal cords!

In *Adventure* #283, a reader asks the logical question, "When Congo Bill takes his sleeping powder and goes to sleep, why doesn't a lion smell him and eat him?" And the editor answers, "That's exactly what happened to Congo Bill, which explains why he won't be appearing in our June issue. Seriously speaking, we are temporarily discontinuing Congorilla...."

Given the fact that gorilla covers sold so well for DC, I've often wondered why Congorilla wasn't tried as a cover feature for *House of Mystery, House of Secrets* or one of the other DC sci-fi/mystery books... as those titles often successfully featured sensational simians. But cover feature or not, Silver Age DC collectors seem to still love the charm and innocence of one of the strangest heroes of the Silver Age. For fans of that wonderful time near the sunset of the 10¢ comic era... there's no gorilla like Congorilla!

Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from '40s through the '60s. She has one of the most extensive collections of 1950's comic books in the US.

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	6	OAKLAND COPY	NM	$75
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	67	BETHLEHEM	NM-	$150
	73	SLOBODIAN COPY	VF/NM	$90
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	76	SLOBODIAN COPY	NM	$100
	78	SLOBODIAN COPY	NM	$100
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He's controversial and his version of comic book history contradicts what fandom has believed for 40 years! The legendary Quality Comics artist, Chuck Cuidera, has stated for all to hear... "I created Blackhawk!"

AN INTERVIEW WITH Chuck "Blackhawk" Cuidera

BY WILL MURRAY

MILITARY COMICS #2
AS THE ENGLISH PILOT CLIMBS FROM HIS PLANE, HE IS GREETED WITH A STONY SILENCE...
WHY DID YOU BRING ME HERE?? ANSWER ME!! WHY DOESN'T SOMEONE SPEAK TO ME??
BLACKHAWKS DO NOT TALK TO COWARDS!!
EASY KID...
..BLACKHAWKS! SO THAT'S WHO YOU ARE! WHY YOU'RE NOTHING BUT AIR PIRATES AND AEROGGING!!
TERRIBLY SORRY... I MUST HAVE LOST MY HEAD... BUT YOU FELLOWS HAVE A RATHER BAD REPUTATION ON THE CONTINENT... NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW JUST WHAT YOUR AIMS ARE...

Over the decades, many names have been associated with the classic Quality-DC Comics series, Blackhawk: Will Eisner. Reed Crandall. Bob Powell. Dick Dillin. But one name runs through the long history of the strip like an unbreakable thread of continuity. Charles "Chuck" Cuidera has been variously described as Blackhawk's co-creator (with Will Eisner), origin scripter and defining artist. Although he drew only the first 11 *Military Comics* Blackhawk appearances before giving way to Reed Crandall, sharp-eyed fans sometimes spotted in the background of later installments grafitti which proclaimed: "Chuck Cuidera created the Blackhawks!"

But the true story has been unestablishable. Cuidera, who dropped out of comics near the end of Blackhawk's DC run in the late '60s, has rarely been interviewed since. Blackhawk fans simply assumed that his silence meant that the artist had passed on long ago. Thanks to fan David Siegel, whose tireless efforts have led to many a "lost" comics talent being feted at the San Diego Comic-Con, Cuidera has consented to a lengthy and informative *CBM* interview.

What follows is salty, opinionated and controversial. *CBM* has elected to let Cuidera's comments stand or fall on their own merits. By publishing his recollections, *CBM* in no way endorses or takes sides in any disputes Cuidera has had with other comics professionals.

MURRAY: Start from the beginning: how did you get into comics?

CUIDERA: I'm from Newark, New Jersey. Born and raised there. My mother had thirteen children. She died young. When my father lost his shirt in the Depression, he sat us down and told us all, "I don't have any more property. We don't have any dough. We did it before, and we'll start all over again." And we did. I graduated from Pratt in 1939, and of course I wanted to be a big-time illustrator. We were just coming out of a depression. I took my portfolio and I hit the different publishing houses. They'd say, "Oh, you got terrific work." But they wouldn't give me a script. I did that for a while, until I got pretty P.O.'d about it. One day I saw an advertisment in the paper for Fox Features. I went over there and they hired me right away.

MURRAY: *Did Victor Fox hire you?*
CUIDERA: Yeah. How do you know him?

A recent photo of Chuck Cuidera and his wife.

MURRAY: *He has a reputation. He used to call himself the "King of Comics."*

CUIDERA: That's right. But anyway, it turns out that they were doing comics, which I was kinda reluctant to do. But Joe Simon and Al Harvey—Al Harvey was the editor and Joe was the art director— said, "Hey kid, why don't you do the comics for us?" I said, "I don't know. I didn't go to Pratt for 'that.'" Anyway, I did one called the Blue Beetle, making $25 a week. And I did other stuff for them, too. Secret Agent Z-5 and Yank Wilson. The other artist who did Blue Beetle was Lou Fine.

MURRAY: *What was it like working at Fox?*

CUIDERA: Joe Simon hired me right on the spot and he said, "You're going to be my assistant." The guy that was sitting in back of him was Jack Kirby. He was doing "Cosmo Carson." I still remember that! (*Laughs*) He used to talk to himself quite a bit. Nice guy. Real nice guy. Of course, I got all the crap to do. Both Joe and Al were fairly decent guys. Of

WELL, YOU SEE... THE BLACKHAWKS ARE THE LAST OF THE FREE MEN OF THE CONQUERED COUNTRIES... WE FIGHT FOR THE FREEDOM OF MAN RATHER THAN FOR PROFIT OR POLITICS!!
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE PIRATES...
WE'RE NOT... COME ALONG, I'LL INTRODUCE YOU TO THE MEN... THEY MAY SEEM A LITTLE HARD BUT YOU CAN'T EXPECT MEN WHO HAVE SEEN THEIR LOVED ONES MURDERED BEFORE THEIR EYES TO HAVE OR EXCUSE WEAKNESSES!!
HERE ARE SOME OF MY MEN... EACH AN EXPERT IN HIS FIELD... READING FROM LEFT TO RIGHT YOU SEE... STANISLAUS, ANDRE, HENDRICK, BORIS, ZEG AND OLAF... YOU WILL MEET THE OTHERS LATER...
A HARDY CREW... EACH SAW HIS COUNTRY CRUSHED BY THE INVADER!!

Chuck "Blackhawk" Cuidera

course, Jack Kirby and Joe were getting ready to do Captain America.

MURRAY: *By reputation, Fox was one of the most colorful characters in early comics publishing.*

CUIDERA: I remember one day Al Harvey coming in to where we were drawing and telling me, "Chuck, you better start looking for another job. This guy's going to go to jail" referring to old man Fox. He owed everybody and his brother. He came out with this soda called Kooba. It was supposed to compete with Coca-Cola. He was also getting ready to compete with the men's magazine, *Esquire.* At that time, everything was a mess over there and we were trying to do the best we possibly could. At 480 Lexington Avenue, at Grand Central, which they tore down, Superman was on the 6th floor and I think we were on the 12th floor. Every time we got on the elevator and Fox was there, when they opened the door to let someone off on the 6th, he used to "spit." They were bitter enemies.

MURRAY: *I know you weren't there very long. How did you make the jump from Fox to Quality Comics?*

CUIDERA: One day an old alumni of mine, Bob Powell—he graduated from Pratt too—called me up and said, "Hey, a publisher over here likes your style and your drawing. He will double the salary you're making over there."

I said, "You've got to be kidding, Bob."

He said, "No, Chuck. Come on over."

I went over there and the guy that was supposed to double my salary, Will Eisner, was down south hunting. Anyway, the publisher, Busy Arnold, saw some of my stuff and he said, "That's terrific." They gave me more money than I was getting over at Fox.

MURRAY: *What did you do at Quality in the beginning?*

CUIDERA: I created the Blackhawks there, but most of the time I was working on Will Eisner's Spirit. It was syndicated. And a funny thing, instead of me doing my Blackhawk, which I had to do at home, I was working on the Spirit doing backgrounds.

MURRAY: *Did you pencil the Spirit, or just ink?*

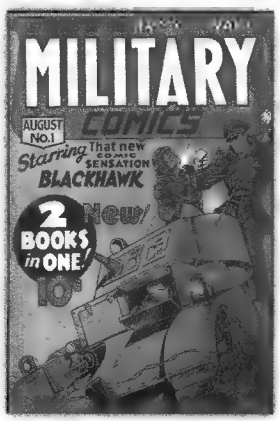
CUIDERA: No. I did the inking. In the beginning, he wouldn't let anybody touch the figures. I think I was one of the first. Lou Fine was the other guy. As a matter of fact, Lou Fine did them before I did. But after the two of them had a fight over money, Busy Arnold moved Lou Fine upstairs. He was a parapelegic, you know. This was in Tudor City, by the way. We still went out to lunch. The other guy who worked with Busy Arnold then was Nick Viscardi. Do you remember him?

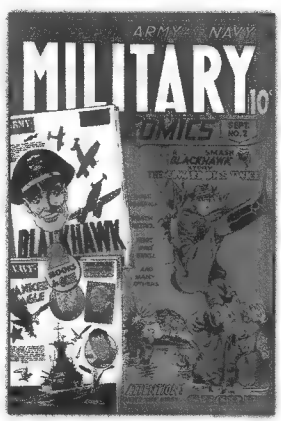
MURRAY: *Yes. He's still around.*

CUIDERA: Yes, he is. He's still drawing.

MURRAY: *He is?*

CUIDERA: Well, he's not 83, like I am. (*Laughs*) Anyway, I stayed until the war. Will Eisner and I didn't get along.





MURRAY: *Eisner is a much-respected person in comics. His contention is that "he" created Blackhawk. Would you give us your view of the Blackhawk creation?*

CUIDERA: I created Blackhawk. Bob Powell helped me write the first story. As a matter of fact, he did most of it.

MURRAY: *So you came up with the original concept?*

CUIDERA: Oh, yeah. The name Blackhawk came from the hockey team. I think Bob was the one who put me onto the Blackhawk name. While the war was going on I thought it was a good idea, every time Germany would march in and conquer a country, one of the patriots would join the Blackhawks. And that's how I got Olaf, the big Swede, Andre, the Frenchmen and Chuck, the Englishman. There were seven. And of course, Chop-Chop, the little Chinaman. And using everyday news to get another member joining the Blackhawks.

MURRAY: *Wasn't Eisner the editor of "Military Comics?"*

CUIDERA: No, he was. I didn't know this, but Busy Arnold gave him $1.25 for erasing and whiting out the stories before they went to the printer.

MURRAY: *Let me read you what Will Eisner said about creating Blackhawk: He said he wanted "a super-guerilla group. I liked the idea of a group having an island of it's own, outcasts from every nation. I had a fascination with the Foreign Legion then."*

CUIDERA: That's not how I remember it... my father had a big World War I book that had a few islands that gave me the idea for the Blackhawk Island.

MURRAY: *So was Eisner's role in Blackhawk purely editorial?*

CUIDERA: No. When I went over there, Will Eisner was down south hunting. I had completed the whole first Blackhawk story when he got back. I didn't have every character then, but I had the story done. I didn't know that Busy Arnold was paying him to take care of the books. He gave the impression that he was running the show, and it was for "him." That's the story.

MURRAY: *So who asked you to create the strip for* Military *#1?*

CUIDERA: I guess that was Busy Arnold. We (the US) declared war, so naturally Busy's competitors were doing war books. That's the only thing I can think of. Busy kinda liked me. In *Military Comics*, Busy Arnold always had the quality of hiring the best artists in the business. Like Alden MacWilliams, who did the destroyer ship. And a few other guys. I was all excited after

I got into the comics, about doing comics. And that we had people like Reed Crandall and Klaus Nordling. Gustafson was another guy who did pretty good, I thought.

MURRAY: *Was Chuck named after you?*
CUIDERA: Yeah, but he was British.

MURRAY: *What kind of a name is Cuidera?*
CUIDERA: Italian.

MURRAY: *Funny, I don't remember an Italian Blackhawk.*
CUIDERA: (*Laughs*)

MURRAY: *I heard that the character of Stanislaus was inspired by Bob Powell, whose real name was Stanislaus Pulowski.*
CUIDERA: Yeah. He was Polish, and he was a hundred percent Pole. I think he was the one who suggested Stanislaus being Polish. Naturally, we did. So we had in a way a League of Nations.

MURRAY: *What made you decide to make Blackhawk himself a man of mystery who also had a Polish background?*
CUIDERA: Well, to satisfy Bob Powell. He said, "Chuck, why don't you make him Polish?" (*Laughs*) I said, "Okay." In the first story, Blackhawk's sister gets knocked off by one of the Germans. That's how it really started. The girl's brother decided to be a Blackhawk. He was the guy who went around and every time Germany moved into a country, he would get one of the patriots to come along and join the Blackhawks. I'd use everyday news for where they would go and what they did. One minute I'd have them dive underwater in the ocean because I am a certified diver from way back. I still take divers here in Florida out.

MURRAY: *Is it true that Olaf was inspired by a character called Big Stoop, from "Terry and the Pirates?"*
CUIDERA: Yes. I swiped that from Big Stoop. Only I made him a little bit different, and taller. But that's where it came from. And I'm glad I swiped him. I had a lot of fun with Olaf. Naturally, I don't like to copy anybody. But for some reason he rang the bell with the other Blackhawks.

The Amazing Blackhawk-Superman Connection!

LOST OVER THE YEARS has been been the importance of Blackhawk as a Golden Age icon. The strip debuted in *Military Comics* #1 (dated August, 1941). By 1944, Quality's slumping *Uncle Sam Comics* was retitled *Blackhawk* with #9. Only the most successful Golden Age strips ran in two or more comics concurrently. In fact, shortly after Blackhawk debuted in *Military*, the strip was outselling every other comic except the mega-hit, *Superman*.

"That's correct," Chuck Cuidera confirmed. "It outsold *Batman*. It started to sell out with the second or third story that I did. All of a sudden, bingo! Busy Arnold decided we ought to have one issue that was strictly Blackhawk."

All through the war, *Superman* and *Blackhawk* struggled for sales supremacy. But these two heroes shared other, stranger connections. In its last season on radio in 1950-51, Superman alternated with a long-forgotten Blackhawk radio show on ABC. Premiering on September 20, 1950, it aired every Wednesday at 5:30 until January 3, 1951.

"It was run of the mill," Cuidera recalls. "I had nothing to do with it. I think it was 13 or 15 episodes. They were original stories. We used to listen to it at Busy Arnold's. The guy who played Blackhawk also played Superman."

By 1950, long-time radio Superman Bud Collyer had moved on. The dual roles of Superman and Blackhawk were played by a former Universal contract player named Michael Fitzmaurice. Ironically, Fitzmaurice had played the uncannily similar role of the Hawk on the 1945 radio aviation show, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*.

All six of Blackhawk's men appeared with him on radio. Reportedly one man played all six roles, fluently switching dialects as he read through the script. His identity is unknown, but at that time *Superman*'s narrator was Ross Martin, a versatile young dialect actor later known for the role of Artemus Gordon on TV's *The Wild, Wild West*. Martin himself may have played Chuck, Olaf, Andre, Chop-Chop and all the rest, single-handedly!

But the Superman-Blackhawk connection doesn't stop there. A year after the radio *Blackhawk*, Republic Studios shot a *Blackhawk* movie serial. Screening episodes of the radio program, the producers were so horrified by the pandemonium of competing dialects, they decided to strip the Blackhawks of their trademark accents.

Amazingly, for the role of the black-clad leader of the Blackhawks, they selected actor Kirk Alyn—the star of two *Superman* serials!

MURRAY: *Obviously Milton Caniff was a big inspiration for you.*
CUIDERA: Yeah. Way back when he was doing "Terry and the Pirates." I don't think I was the only one. (*Laughs*) I had the pleasure of meeting and talking to him just before he died. My other favorite was Hal Foster, who did *Prince Valiant*. But the thing I remember he did a book on Tarzan. Oh boy, the animals were just fantastic! I just loved that guy. I think he was separate from all the other cartoonists. There's something about *Prince Valiant*, that it *is* separate. The knowledge of historical things really got to me. I said, "This guy must have spent almost his whole life in the library!" (*Laughs*)

MURRAY: *Blackhawk uniforms resemble the German military style.* *(Cont. on page 50)*

Return to the PLANET OF THE APES

When French author Pierre Boulle's 10th novel was published in 1963, it was widely considered to be one of his lesser works. Certainly, said the pundits, it was neither as important nor as commercial as his previous smash, *The Bridge on the River Kwai,* which became an Academy Award winning film.

The novel was called *Le Planete Des Singes* (or "Monkey Planet" in English), and like the prognosticators, who thought *Star Trek* would die when the TV show was canceled or those who suggested that comics would disappear after the advent of video games, the pundits were wrong.

Producer Arthur P. Jacobs was an old-fashioned Hollywood executive who had climbed his way up the ladder to a position of recognition among the elite of the movie business. He had most recently finished *Dr. Doolittle* and latched onto the film rights of Boulle's novel. He had the rights and the basic idea of what he wanted to do, but he didn't have a script, a star, or a studio. In Hollywood, that puts you on a par with the valet who parks your car. (The valet probably has an option on something, too.) Jacobs, though, believed in the property, and he doggedly pitched the concept around town in his unrelenting attempts to get the film made.

Even while he couldn't get a positive response from the studio heads, Jacobs started building his team. Charlton Heston was already a well-known and highly respected actor when Jacobs approached him. The star of such classics as *Ben Hur* and *The Ten Commandments* was intrigued.

"The novel was singularly uncinematic; there wasn't even a treatment outlining an effective script," Heston wrote in his 1996 autobiography (entitled *In The Arena*) "Still, I smelled a good film in it. All Arthur had was the rights to the novel and a portfolio of paintings depicting possible scenes. He came up to the house and displayed them, along with what Hollywood calls 'The Pitch.' When Frank Schaffner came by, he liked it enough to commit as director, but Arthur was a long way from persuading a studio to put up any actual money to make the movie."

With Heston and director Franklin J. Schaffner (Oscar winner for directing *Patton*

The legions of *Planet of the Apes* comic and magazine collectors have long known that the dictum of legendary DC editor Julie Schwartz is true: "Magazines and comics that feature human-like gorillas on the cover... sell!"

in 1970) attached, the film still went nowhere for the next year and a half. If there truly is a "Development Hell" as it's called in the trade, Arthur Jacobs and his project were in it.

"Star Wars and the still-enduring cycle of space operas that followed came later," Heston recalled. "Then the project recalled the Saturday serials of the 1930s. 'No kidding, talking monkeys and rocket ships? Buck Rogers and Ming the Merciless, right? Gedouttahere!'"

During that time, though, Jacobs was able to elicit some interest from Richard Zanuck, the head of 20th Century Fox. He was interested in the concept, but he wondered how audiences would react to the apes? Would they be believable or would moviegoers just laugh.

By J. C. Vaughn

EASY, JASON, EASY...
YOU DIRTY, STINKING, CRAZY APE--!! WHAT'D YOU DO THAT FOR--?!?
PLEASE, GRIMALDI-- YOUR TEMPER..!!
SO LONG AS I LIVE AND BREATHE--
--NO ONE WILL FLIRT WITH MY MALAGUENA!!

Return to the PLANET OF THE APES

In the amazing age of special effects wizardry that constitutes Hollywood today, it's hard to over-estimate the importance of the believability of the apes in the first film in its day. This wasn't going to be the guy-in-a-gorilla-suit stealing the pretty young woman in some 1930's or '40's grade B adventure. If this film were to be made, it would be a multi-million-dollar undertaking. Neither Zanuck nor his board of directors wanted to be seen as spending their stockholders' money on this movie if people were just going to laugh at it.

Jacobs, Heston, and Schaffner suggested a test film to show that the ape characters could be taken seriously. The result not only sold Zanuck, who in turn sold the Fox board of directors, it became one of the enduring underpinnings of the franchise's mythos.

For many years this film was unknown to fans, but once revealed there was much speculation as to whether or not it still existed. It was if not the Holy Grail than certainly a close second to Apes' fans. Until the recent documentary *Behind the Planet of the Apes*, only snippets of this film had ever been seen by the public. Even with the extended cut in the documentary, few have ever seen the entire test.

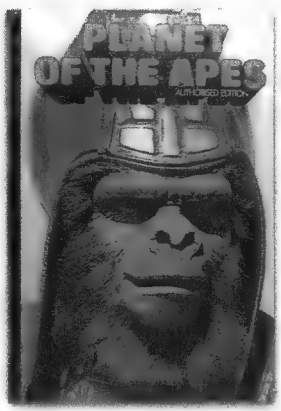
Starring Heston as astronaut Colonel Thomas (which, of course, became Col. Taylor) and Edward G. Robinson as the orangutan Dr. Zaius, this five-minute test film featured an early, much less detailed version of the ape faces which would later win acclaim for creative make-up supervisor John Chambers.

From the test one can see that Robinson would have made an interesting Dr. Zauis, but it would have been an almost entirely disparate version of the one portrayed by Maurice Evans (an acclaimed Shakespearean actor known to American audiences chiefly as Samantha's father on the sitcom *Bewitched*).

Although this script was more talky and differed dramatically from the finished version, there are some elements that survived in the feature film (particularly toward the archeological dig scene at the end where Taylor and Zaius exchange some of their best dialogue in the cave). Regardless of the differences and similarities, the test film enabled Zanuck to get the money to give the go ahead to Jacobs.

Ed Hannigan's artwork from "Evolution's Nightmare" in *POTA* #5.

THAT WAY, APE-- BEFORE THE SCAVENGERS MISTAKE US FOR CARRION.
KNOW HE WAY, AN...AND NOT IN THE T OF TAKING ERS FROM LIKES OF YOU.
EGAN ON A FAMILIAR AND PECTED NOTE, ONE STRIKING SCORDANCE AND FAR FROM HARMONY...



Apes around the world—(above) one of the British *Apes* annuals, and (below) *Guide* prices on the Marvel and Gold Key *Apes* magazines and comics.

Next stop, The Twilight Zone

Jacobs had been in regular contact with writer-producer Rod Serling, known to fans of science fiction (and great television) as the man behind *The Twilight Zone* and later, *Night Gallery*. Serling's connection with *Planet of the Apes* pre-dated Jacobs' by several years.

The film rights had first been optioned by the King Brothers, "...who did mostly Indian elephant pictures shot for about $1.80—because elephants weren't even scale then," Serling told Marvel's *Planet of the Apes* magazine in 1974. He was con-

PLANET OF THE APES GOOD 'N' CHEAP

SOURCES: *The Guide: The Overstreet Comic Book Price Update* #2 (Dec 1998) and *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* #28 (Apr 1998)

PLANET OF THE APES (Marvel Comics)

#	GD	FN	NM
#1	2.50	7.50	24.00
#2	1.50	4.50	12.00
#3-10	1.10	3.30	9.00
#11-20	1.25	3.75	10.00
#21-29	1.75	5.25	14.00

ADVENTURES ON THE PLANET OF THE APES (Marvel Comics, color reprints of b&w magaz ne movie adaptations)

1	1.10	3.30	9.00
2-5	2.00	5.00	
6-11	1.00	2.80	7.00

Buckler #2-c, Nasser #7-c, Starlin #1-c, 6-c

MOVIE COMICS (Gold Key)

Beneath The Planet of the Apes #30044-012
Pull-out poster, photo-c

w/poster	6.00	18.00	60.00

vinced a movie could be made inexpensively, so he wrote a treatment with a scene-by-scene breakdown for the company. The rights next were acquired by Blake Edwards, known then for *Peter Gunn*, but later famous for the *Pink Panther* film series. Serling said Edwards told him not to worry about the budget. The resulting screenplay, he speculated, would have cost $100 million to produce (in 1974!) and was very similar to the original novel in that there was an ape civilization on a par with our own.

When Jacobs acquired the rights and a more modest budget ($5.8 million was the final reported figure) was arranged, Serling again went back to the typewriter. He wrote three drafts of the screenplay before the duties were handled over to Michael Wilson, who had previously worked on *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, among many other projects.

Among the many contributions to the mythos which stem from Serling's drafts, the structure of the film itself and the final scene in which Taylor realizes that he isn't on some distant planet after all.

Wilson, even according to Serling, was the one who added the inverted humor to the screenplay. Lines like "The dearly departed once said to me, 'I never met an ape I didn't like,'" or "You know what they say. 'Human see, human do,'" clearly helped inject the audience with the world-turned-upside-down feeling the character Taylor was supposed to be experiencing, though they did so in a humorous fashion.

With Charlton Heston as Taylor, Roddy McDowall as Cornelius, Kim Hunter as Zira, Maurice Evans as Dr. Zaius and Linda Harrison as Nova, *Planet of the Apes* was ready to roll... and roll it did! In addition to the average pitfalls that face a film crew, *Apes* had at least two, which were somewhat unique. The actors playing the lead apes spent four hours at the beginning of each day getting into make-up and two hours each night getting out of it, and if that wasn't enough, Heston caught the flu and almost couldn't work.

Like the scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* where Indiana Jones just shoots the mammoth, menacing swordsman (which came about because Harrison Ford had dysentery and could barely stand), the timing of Heston's illness lead to a great moment.

When he returned, his voice was weak. It was a struggle to get the dialogue out, but that effort paid off with one of the most famous movie lines in a science fiction film: "Take your stinking paws off me, you damn dirty ape." If he had been healthy, the line would have been the same, but would it have had that same raw quality? One can only speculate.

The film was released February 8, 1968, and a small dynasty was born. It was hailed on many levels. Though it is obviously a discourse on racism, it stirred up none of the reaction that a movie with a then-modern setting dealing with similar issues would have raised. To be sure, many of the viewers were children and they didn't care about messages. To them, it was just a great movie. According to all reports, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* and the other sequels were afterthoughts, reactions to the boffo box office reports for *Planet of the Apes*.

NBC's *Return to the Planet of the Apes* was the last new filmed Ape entertainment produced.

[*Editor's note: Merchandising, too, was very much an afterthought then, but for more details on* Apes *collectibles check out Terry Hoknes' excellent contribution on POTA collectibles elsewhere in this issue.* *SEE PAGE 44.*]

Rod Serling wrote a proposal for the sequel, as did Pierre Boulle (some of Boulle's *Planet of the Men* proposal made it into the third film, *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*) and others.

Although Heston did not want to participate in *Beneath*, he agreed to reprise his role as Taylor in the early scenes and again at the end of the film, donating his agreed-upon Guild-minimum fee to his son Fraser's school.

Roddy McDowall was tied to another project, making this the only live-action *Apes* film or show he didn't act in. He was, however, in the film, as it begins where the first one left off. Since his character, Cornelius, was an ape, McDowall could at least visually be replaced. Heston's Taylor, though, was the character the audience was supposed to identify

EDITORS OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

The mid-1970s wasn't exactly the easiest time to be an editor or editor-in-chief at Marvel. As matter of fact, after Stan Lee and Roy Thomas, the "chief" was almost a turnstile until Jim Shooter arrived.

Marvel's Editors-in-Chief

Roy Thomas	#1-3
Marv Wolfman	#4-10
Archie Goodwin	#11-29

P.O.T.A. Editors

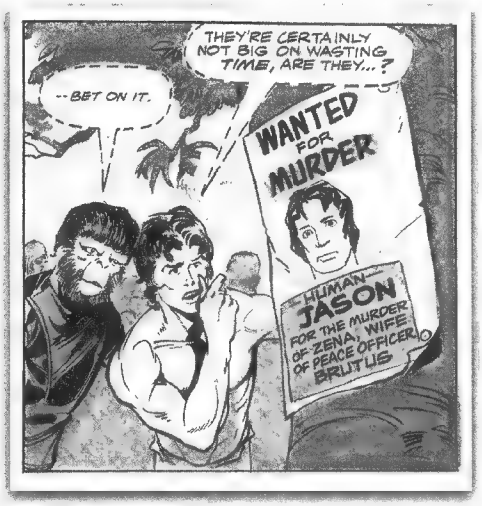
Tony Isabella	#1-3
Don McGregor	#4-8
Archie Goodwin	#9
John Warner (associate editor)	#10-23
John Warner (editor)	#24-29

with, so replacing him was trickier.

James Franciscus was cast as Brent, an astronaut sent out after Taylor's original crew. He follows a different route, but basically ends up going through the same sort of things Taylor did, even finding out that he's back home on Earth, not some weird way-off world.

While the story lacks in originality (it was, after all, the sequel), it is still a gripping adventure and serves as a further exploration into the world the apes have built.

In the story by associate producer Mort Abrahams and writer Paul Dehn (*Goldfinger*), viewers discover that mute humans hunted by apes are not our only inheritors. Below the surface of a nuked New York lives a race of radiation-scarred mutants with amazing telepathic powers. These mutants, lead by a man called Mendez XXVI, fear Brent (although it's not said why with their powers they couldn't tell he was telling the truth), but they fear the approaching ape army even more. Brent and Taylor are reunited and as the apes attack, they set off a bomb, a last reminder of our civilization.


THEY'RE CERTAINLY NOT BIG ON WASTING TIME, ARE THEY...?
--BET ON IT.
WANTED FOR MURDER
--HUMAN-- JASON FOR THE MURDER OF ZENA, WIFE OF PEACE OFFICER BRUTUS

Jason & Alexander from "Terror on the Planet of the Apes," an ongoing story in the Marvel magazines.

Short on the subtle social commentary of the first film, *Beneath* goes for its legacy in one big action. Taylor, dying, presses the button that destroys the world.

Beneath the Planet of the Apes was released in 1970, and that should have been that. Except it did well enough that Fox wanted a sequel. Again. Since Colonel Taylor had just blown up the Earth in the year 3955, it didn't seem like there would be much ground on which to base a third film. To the financial types at Fox, that was just an annoying detail, a detail Arthur Jacobs was only too happy to confront and turn into another film.

Escape from the Planet of the Apes (1971) was written by Paul Dehn, who would then go on to write the screenplay for the fourth film and the story for the fifth.

In *Escape*, Cornelius (once again played by Roddy McDowall), Zira (still portrayed by Kim Hunter), and the previously unmentioned Dr. Milo (Sal Mineo) escaped the destruction of the Earth only to be sent back in time to the then current 1970s. Milo is killed right away before he can explain to their new human friends exactly how he figured out how to work Col. Taylor's spacecraft (which sank in a lake the last time the viewers saw it).

Many of the racial and societal themes addressed in the first film were confronted again from the reverse angle as the apes are made into first oddities, then celebrities, and then fugitives. Finally, they are killed in an attempt to prevent the downfall of man and the society they had come from.

Yes, the films had killed their leading characters. Now no one from the first film was left alive. That could have been that if *Escape* hadn't performed at the box office, but it did. This time, though, Arthur Jacobs and his staff were prepared. During the story, Zira gave birth to a babe she named Milo. At the end of the film, we see that the humans have killed a baby chimp, but not the right one. Milo lives on with circus owner Sr. Armando (Ricardo Montalban).

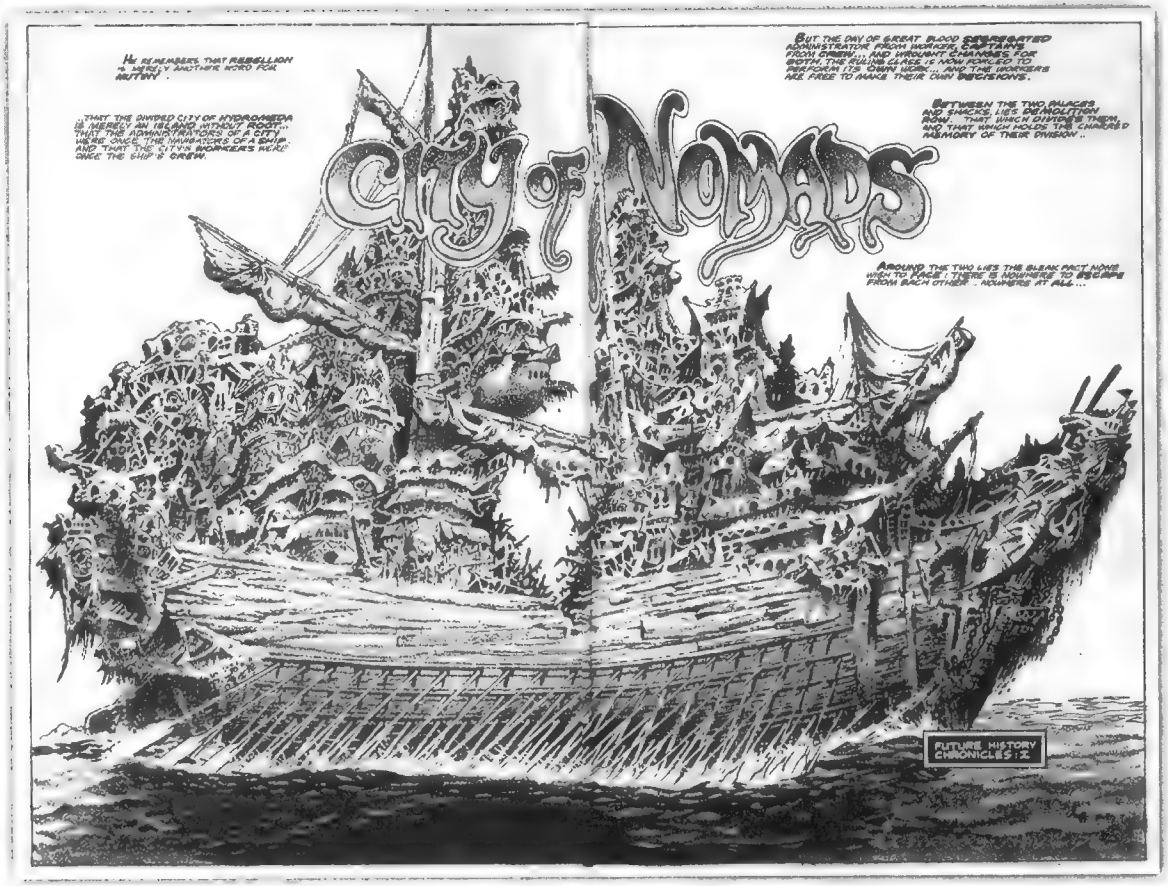
Conquest of the Planet of the Apes (1972) is set in what was the near future, 1991. The dogs and cats have been killed by a plague, and apes have replaced them. First they were pets, but now they are slaves.

It is a bleak, brutal, and dark future explored in a fairly unflinching fashion by writer Dehn and director J. Lee Thompson. It is, as one would suspect, a further and perhaps more direct attack on racial issues.

Roddy McDowall was the only remaining cast member, this time playing the grown-up version of baby Milo. Now he goes by the name Cesar. In short order, he escalates the level of ape discontent into a full-blown insurrection. Man, in this city, is overthrown.

"Tonight, we have seen the birth... of the planet of the apes!" Cesar told the cheering throng of rebel apes. Only that dialogue and

Mike Ploog's fluid artwork brought apes and humans alike to life.



their other words in that scene were "looped," or dubbed in later. The original speech, perhaps lost to time, featured a call to genocide as well as the call to arms. Fox insisted that it be cut rather than be perceived as encouraging such behavior (the Watts Riots of the '60s were still fresh in everyone's minds).

Alpha... and Omega

When *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* began production, Arthur Jacobs knew it would be the last in the series. Budgets had dwindled from each picture to the next, dropping from $5.8 million for the first film to $1.8 million for *Battle,* and Jacobs wanted to move onto other projects (he had produced Woody Allen's *Play It Again, Sam* for director Herbert Ross in 1972). With Cesar (McDowall) now the leader of an agrarian ape-human city, the former slave masters (the humans) must now struggle for equality with their former slaves and current masters. The situation for the humans is, by and large, much better than it was for the apes in *Conquest,* but it is not freedom. This subtle point was not as powerfully carried out as it could have been with a larger budget, but that was not to be the case.

While of interest to *Apes* fans, there is little to recommend the last feature to outsiders. There is, though, one interesting point in this film that even many die-hard fans aren't aware of. There are two distinctly different prints of *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*. In the second, more rare version (which follows the final draft of the screenplay), the viewer sees a few key scenes regarding the Alpha Omega bomb. The viewer also sees Mendez, the Governor's aide, decide not to use it. In this version it is clear that he is the forefather of Mendez XXVI from *Beneath.*

Battle for the Planet of the Apes was released in 1973, and Arthur P. Jacobs died suddenly in 1974. At the time, Ape-mania was in full swing. The Marvel Comics magazine *Planet of the Apes* was launched. For some reason it was made clear that Marvel could not adapt the upcoming television show, but they could adapt the films and create original stories [*see sidebar*]. While the royalties generated by the magazine and other products were not even a blip on the radar by today's *Star Wars*-inspired standards, *Apes* merchandise was a big seller.

That same year, Twentieth Century Fox and CBS teamed up to create the television series *Planet of the Apes.* Set in a different time (3085), earlier than the first film but later than Battle, the series followed the exploits of two human astronauts, Alan Virdon (Ron Harper) and Pete Burke (James Naughton), who enlist the companionship of a chimpanzee, Galen (Roddy McDowall) as they avoid capture by the ape authorities.

As with most dramas of the time, Virdon, Burke and Galen spent their time fighting social injustices (It was, after all, the '70s). The condition of humans in this period is substantially

One of Tom Sutton's vast city ships from "The Future History Chronicles" in Marvel's POTA magazine. See our exclusive Doug Moench interview beginning on page 31.

(Continued on page 28)

BOOK 'EM

Novel & Movie NOVELIZATIONS

by Mark Haynes & J.C. Vaughn

Within the writing community as it exists outside of the comic arena, film and TV adaptations are generally looked upon as the unloved stepchildren of real novels; books that are written to capitalize on the success of a given project (or recoup expenses if the show is a bomb). The writers that take on these projects are, by and large, taking them on out of financial necessity.

Because of the stigma that goes along with the word "novelization" (sometimes deservedly so), substantial contributions are sometimes overlooked. For example, Alan Dean Foster's work on the Star Trek Log series, based on Star Trek's animated incarnation, contained significant enhancements in terms of drama and characterization.

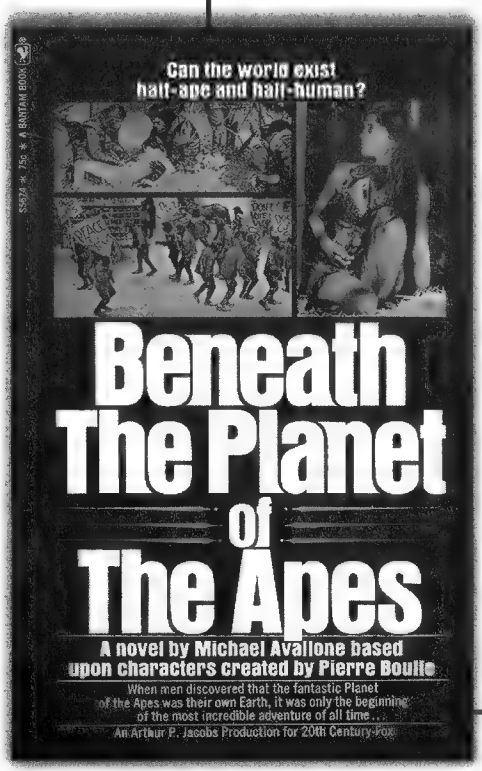
This observation holds true in the novelizations of three of the four Planet of the Apes sequel films. While the original Pierre Boulle novel served as the foundation for the screenplay that started the series, writers such as John Jakes, Jerry Pournelle, and Michael Avallone took liberties that not only enhanced their individual efforts but served to tighten an already strong continuity between the stories.

The Apes books, though out of print, remain relatively easy to find.

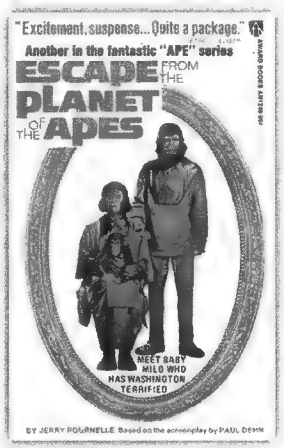
Planet of the Apes (original novel)

The entire Planet of the Apes phenomenon was born of the Pierre Boulle novel *Le Planet De Singes*, first published in France in 1963. In the translation to English it became known as Monkey Planet. He also contributed a draft screenplay for the first film and an un-produced sequel, Planet of the Men, elements of which showed up in *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*. The book is distinctly different than the film and there was no novelization.

Astronaut Arthur Levain and his colleagues journey from Earth and end up on a world where apes are the dominant species. Aside from the astronauts themselves, major differences include the level of technology (much higher than the film apes) and the treatment of humans (mostly better, but still not good). The novel ends with Levain and Nova returning to Earth only to be greeted by apes. Interestingly, the novel touched on the subject of race conscious memory much earlier than many of its science fiction peers.


Can the world exist half-ape and half-human?
Beneath The Planet of The Apes
A novel by Michael Avallone based upon characters created by Pierre Boulle
When men discovered that the fantastic Planet of the Apes was their own Earth, it was only the beginning of the most incredible adventure of all time...
An Arthur P. Jacobs Production for 20th Century-Fox

The novelizations of the second (by Michael Avallone, left) and third (by Jerry Pournelle, below) Apes movies.

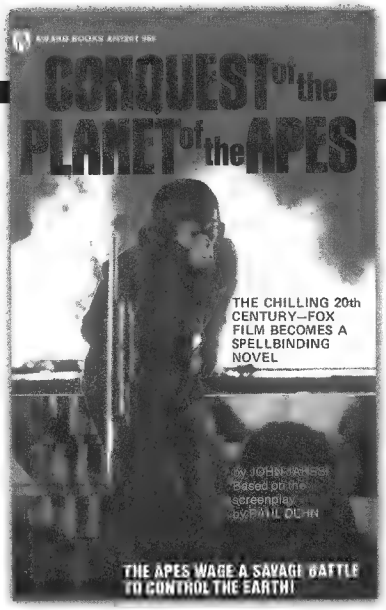

"Excitement, suspense... Quite a package."
Another in the fantastic "APE" series
ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES
MEET BABY MILO WHO HAS WASHINGTON TERRIFIED
BY JERRY POURNELLE. Based on the screenplay by PAUL DEHN

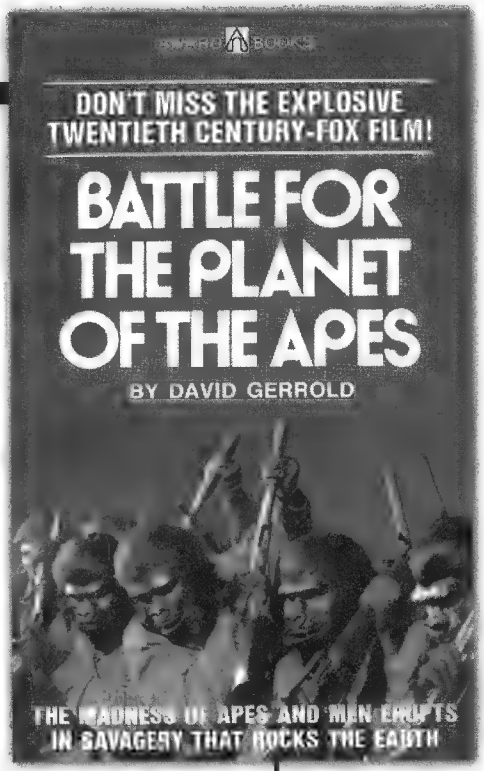
Beneath the Planet of the Apes (movie novelization)

This adaptation of the second Planet of the Apes feature is based on a screenplay by Paul Dehn and is the first look at familiar events from a different perspective. The differences between novelization and film are more psychological in nature in their examination of how his mission to rescue Taylor has presented astronaut Brent with a mind-bending contradiction that brings him to the edge of his sanity.

In the film, actor James Franciscus portrayed Brent as more of the action hero, using whatever means at his disposal in his quest to find Taylor. In the novelization, author Michael Avallone

paints a different portrait. His Brent is a man on the edge. The idea of ending up on a planet where apes talk and humans are dumb brutes is something that Brent fights as much with his head as with his hands. As the story moves underground, so does the mood of the writing. The realization that he is still on Earth sinking slowly in, Brent becomes more resigned and moves ever closer to madness as new proof of his fate confronts him at every turn.


CONQUEST of the PLANET of the APES
THE CHILLING 20th CENTURY—FOX FILM BECOMES A SPELLBINDING NOVEL
THE APES WAGE A SAVAGE BATTLE TO CONTROL THE EARTH!


DON'T MISS THE EXPLOSIVE TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX FILM!
BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES
BY DAVID GERROLD
THE MADNESS OF APES AND MEN ERUPTS IN SAVAGERY THAT ROCKS THE EARTH

Escape from the Planet of the Apes (movie novelization)

This novelization had probably the toughest job of the series... because it required the author to explain how apes, who had no technology, no sources of power, and could not even conceive of flight, could repair and launch a spaceship. But Jerry Pournelle, writing from a Paul Dehn screenplay, does a masterful job of re-crafting ape society and avoids contradicting what has come before... all the while making us believe that apes can fly!

Several key sequences from the film are expanded in the book. While in the holding pen at the Los Angeles Zoo, the ape refugees marvel at the technological society commanded by man. The doomed Dr. Milo is moved to remark that "the stories were true" about man having such a culture.

Later, as Cornelius and Zira are examined by the Presidential Commission, Cornelius reveals that the apes did not have technological culture not because they didn't know how, but because they had no choice.

It seems that, although not revealed to the general ape public, man had completely depleted and exhausted the fossil fuels from planet Earth. Following these revelations, and the introduction of the kindly circus owner Armando (who will play a pivotal role in the next installment), the story moves forward and we are left with a greater sense of injustice at the fate of the apes, present and future.

Conquest of the Planet of the Apes (movie novelization)

In this installment of the series, director J. Lee Thompson (director of the original *Cape Fear*) created a level of violence that was unlike any previous apes film. Indeed, it was so violent and incendiary that a re-edited version with a new ending replaced the version that had been screened for test audiences. Following director *(Continued on page 30)*

Before North & South and after "The Trouble With Tribbles," John Jakes and David Gerrold wrote *Apes* novelizations.

THE COMICS CONNECTION

Apes TV Novelizations and their tie to Bronze Age Marvel

The four *Planet of the Apes* TV show novelizations were written by George Alec Effinger, a Marvel horror veteran. He wrote such Bronze Age wonders the last four (of six) issues of Gullivar Jones, Warrior of Mars and the first four adventures of "Thongor, Warrior of Lost Lemuria" in *Creatures on the Loose* #18-25. He was preceded on the title by Roy Thomas and followed by DC sci-fi legend Gardner Fox and later Steve Gerber. *Creatures on the Loose* would later contain "Manwolf."

Planet of the Apes #1: Man the Fugitive
Planet of the Apes #2: Escape to Tomorrow
Planet of the Apes #3: Journey into Terror
Planet of the Apes #4: Lord of the Apes

Return to the PLANET OF THE APES

Continued from 25

below what it was in *Battle,* but still above what is was in the first film.

The Dr. Zaius of this period (Booth Colman) definitely knows that man once ruled the planet and fears Virdon and Burke for that reason. His military counterpart, General Urko (*Star Trek*'s Mark Lenard) just knows they represent a threat to their way of life.

Doug Moench and Mike Ploog built on the movies' legacy in the Marvel magazine.

The show was up against ABC's *The Night Stalker* and didn't do well at all in the ratings. It was canceled after just 14 episodes were filmed. For reasons lost to the murkiness of time, one episode did not air in the U.S. while the show was on network television (it did air overseas with the original broadcasts). The thirteenth episode, "The Liberator," got its first U.S. broadcast during the Sci-Fi Channel's *Planet of the Apes* re-runs.

Even that, though, wasn't enough to kill the apes off. The next year, NBC unveiled *Return to the Planet of the Apes.*

Return was yet another take on the same song. Three astronauts (Bill Hudson, Judy Franklin and Jeff Carter), crash land on the planet, meet the humans, meet the apes, find out it's Earth and so on. This time it's 3979.

The interesting twist was the Underdwellers, who were somewhat like the mutants in *Beneath,* but who worshipped a statue of Judy which read "Lost USA," so they called her "Usa." It was clearly in contradiction to some elements of the films, but by and large the stories were very inventive.

The series was produced by David DePatie and the legendary Friz Freleng (without digressing too far into the realm of editorializing, it is safe to say that Freleng didn't get "legendary" with this show). As with many animated programs of its era, the most discernible feature of the program was the obvious cost-cutting approach taken in the re-use of standard scenes, action and backgrounds.

The above complaints not withstanding, it is definitely possible to detect the influence of director-associate producer Doug Wildey in the production. *Return to the Planet of the Apes* was canceled after one season, though, and the Marvel magazine soon followed it. For many years, there were no new Apes stories.

The 30th Anniversary re-release late last year and the untimely death of Roddy McDowall soon after called attention to the films again, and critics seemed willing to take another look at the series.

Revivals have already happened in comics. Adventure Comics, then an imprint of Malibu Comics, published a series in the early '90s that was initially well received before getting buried by the marketplace. On the internet, ape websites abound. There are brand new trading cards and action figures. The boxed set of the videos is a top seller and the 30th Anniversary documentary *Behind the Planet of the Apes* has filled in the missing pieces for many collectors.

It is film, though, where the uncertainty lies. There have been many rumors of remakes or new *Planet of the Apes* films for several years now, but there has yet to be any concrete progress. A call to the right people at Fox will earn one the answer, "It's in development."

The phrase "in development," however, can mean anything from "we start shooting tomorrow" to a discussion where one executive looks at the other and asks, "Do you think we ought to remake *Planet of the Apes*?"

Thanks to Mark Haynes, Mike Wilbur, Arnold T. Blumberg, Terry Holknes, & the rest of the guys at Ape Management.

MARVEL PLANET OF THE APES CHECKLIST

Here's the Story

Adaptations

Planet of the Apes #1-6
Beneath the Planet of the Apes #7-11
Escape from the Planet of the Apes #12-16
Conquest of the Planet of the Apes #17-21
Battle for the Planet of the Apes #23-28

Original Stories

Terror on the Planet of the Apes #1-4, 6, 8,11,13-14, 19-20, 23, 26-28
Evolution's Nightmare #5
Kingdom on an Island of the Apes #9-10, 21
Future History Chronicles #12, 15, 17, 24, 29
Quest for the Planet of the Apes #22 (two parts)

PLANET OF THE APES CHECKLIST
THE MAGAZINES

#1 (Aug 1974)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
Prologue
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Mike Ploog

Planet of the Apes
Part One
Writer: Doug Moench
Pencils: George Tuska
Inks: Mike Esposito

#2 (Oct 1974)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"The Forbidden Zone of Forgotten Horrors"
"Lick the Sky Crimson"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Mike Ploog

Planet of the Apes
Chapter Two "World of Captive Humans"
Writer: Doug Moench
Pencils: George Tuska
Inks: Mike Esposito

#3 (Dec 1974)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"Spawn of the Mutant Pits"
"The Abomination Arena!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Mike Ploog & Frank Chiarmonte

Planet of the Apes
Chapter Three "Manhunt"
Writer: Doug Moench
Pencils: George Tuska
Inks: Mike Esposito

#4 (Jan 1975)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"A Riverboat named Simian"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Mike Ploog & Frank Chiarmonte

Planet of the Apes
Chapter Four "The Trial"
Writer: Doug Moench
Pencils: George Tuska
Inks: Mike Esposito

#5 (Feb 1975)
Evolution's Nightmare
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Ed Hannigan & Jim Mooney

Planet of the Apes
Chapter Five "Into The Forbidden Zone"
Writer: Doug Moench
Pencils: George Tuska
Inks: Mike Esposito

#6 (Mar 1975)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"Maleguena in Zone Forbidden"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Mike Ploog

Planet of the Apes
Chapter Four "The Secret"
Writer: Doug Moench
Pencils: George Tuska
Inks: Mike Esposito

#7 (Apr 1975)
Beneath the Planet of the Apes
Part 1
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

Beneath the Planet of the Apes
Part 2
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#8 (May 1975)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"The Planet Inheritors"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Mike Ploog

Beneath the Planet of the Apes
Part 3 "The Warhead Messiah!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#9 (Jun 1975)
Kingdom on an Island of the Apes
Part One
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Rico Rival

Beneath the Planet of the Apes
Part 4 "The Horror Inquisition!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#10 (Jul 1975)
Kingdom on an Island of the Apes
Part Two
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Rico Rival

Beneath the Planet of the Apes
Part 5 "Children of the Bomb!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#11 (Aug 1975)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"When the Lawgiver Returns"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Mike Ploog

Beneath the Planet of the Apes
Part 6 "The Hell of Holocaust!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#12 (Sep 1975)
Future History Chronicles
"City of Nomads"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Tom Sutton

Escape from the Planet of the Apes
Part 1 "Upward to the Earth!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Rico Rival

#13 (Oct 1975, cover date Aug)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"The Magick-Man's Last Gasp Purple Light Show"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Mike Ploog

Escape from the Planet of the Apes
Part 2 "Strangers in a Stranger Land!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Rico Rival

#14 (Nov 1975, cvr price drops to 75¢)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"Up The Nose-Tube to Monkey-Trash"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Mike Ploog

Escape from the Planet of the Apes
Part 3 "Trouble in Paradise Lost!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Rico Rival

#15 (Dec 1975)
Future History Chronicles
"Dreamer in Emerald Silence"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Tom Sutton

Escape from the Planet of the Apes
Part 4 "In The Cradle of a Father's Sins!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Rico Rival

#16 (Jan 1976)
Escape from the Planet of the Apes
Part 5 "When the Calliope Cries Death!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Rico Rival

Escape from the Planet of the Apes
Part 6 "But Who Shall Inherit the Mask!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Rico Rival

#17 (Feb 1976)
Future History Chronicles
"Graveyard of Lost Cities"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Tom Sutton

Conquest of the Planet of the Apes
Part 1 "Slaves"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#18 (Mar 1976)
Conquest of the Planet of the Apes
Part 2 "Rites of Bondage"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

Conquest of the Planet of the Apes
Part 3 "To Serve the Slaves!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#19 (Apr 1976)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"Demons of the Psychotronic"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Mike Ploog & Tom Sutton

(Continued on page 60)

BOOK 'EM *(Continued from page 27)*

Thompson's lead, author John Jakes (yes, that John Jakes) depicts a world of brutality and totalitarianism that makes this novelization a worthy successor to its film counterpart. Jakes, taking full advantage of his ability to create without a thought to movie ratings, leads the reader through a visceral study of apes in revolt.

Set in 1991, the story follows Armando and Caesar (the now fully-grown son of Cornelius and Zira) as they travel to a city where apes make up the cruelly treated servant class. Although it is not clear what specific events have happened to create such a drastic change in American government as depicted in the film, the novelization presents a theory. The abandonment of basic civil rights in favor of a police state is the direct result of the apes travelling to the past as seen in *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*. More specifically, Cornelius' testimony, at the time hypothetical, regarding how his society came to be, with the plague that killed all the Earth's dogs and cats, is confirmed as true and was the turning point that turned the United States into a police state. [See John Jakes sidebar]

Battle for the Planet of the Apes (movie novelization)

In the aftermath of nuclear holocaust, the fifth and final chapter of the apes saga follows Caesar as he leads a group of human and ape survivors into the wilderness to start a new world. While his intentions are noble, it is obvious that the humans do not enjoy equality with the apes. Further, there are apes (specifically General Aldo) that delight in bullying their one-time masters. This is set against the backdrop of Caesar's search for information about his parents and Earth's ultimate fate in the bombed-out remains of a nearby city. While in the city, Caesar's party is discovered by mutated humans who still live in the radioactive ruins. Again directed by J. Lee Thompson, this film is played more for its action-adventure content and less for its sociopolitical commentary.

The novelization by David Gerrold follows this lead and the result is little more than a bland retelling of what was, essentially, a film for children. While there are some notable elements to this adaptation and there is a brilliant scene with the humans as they share a forbidden meal of meat (the apes have dictated a vegetarian diet), the novelization follows the film almost like a blueprint.

PLANET OF THE APES CHECKLIST

(Continued from page 29)

Conquest of the Planet of the Apes
Part 4 "The Savage is King"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#20 (May 1976)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"Society of the Psychodrome"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Tom Sutton

Conquest of the Planet of the Apes
Part 5 "Army of Slaves"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#21 (Jun 1976)
Kingdom on an Island of the Apes
"Beast on the Planet of the Apes"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Herb Trimpe & Dan Adkins

Conquest of the Planet of the Apes
Part 6 "Hail Caesar! Hail the King!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#22 (Jul 1976)
Quest for the Planet of the Apes
Part 1 "Seeds of Future Deaths"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Rico Rival

Quest for the Planet of the Apes
Part 2 "Keepers of Future Death!"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

#23 (Aug 1976)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"Messiah of the Monkey Demons"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Tom Sutton

Battle for the Planet of the Apes
Part 1 "The Weapons Shop of Paradise"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Vincene Alcazar & Sonny Trinidad

#24 (Sep 1976)
Battle for the Planet of the Apes
Part 2 "The Doomsday Spawn"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Alfredo Alcala

Future History Chronicles
"The Shadows of Haunted Cathedrulus"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Tom Sutton

#25 (Oct 1976)
Battle for the Planet of the Apes
Part 3 "The Doomsday Spawn"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Sonny Trinidad, Young Montano, Dino Castrillo, & Marshall Rogers

Battle for the Planet of the Apes
Part 4 "The Doomsday Spawn"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Sonny Trinidad & Virgil Redondo

#26 (Nov 1976)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"Northlands"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Herb Trimpe and Virgil Redondo

Battle for the Planet of the Apes
Part 5 "Assault on Paradise"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Dino Castrillo

#27 (Dec 1976)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"Apes of Iron"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Herb Trimpe

Battle for the Planet of the Apes
Part 6 "Conquest of Blood"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Virgil Redondo

#28 (Jan 1977)
Terror on the Planet of the Apes
"Revolt of the Gorilloids"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Herb Trimpe and Virgil Redondo

Battle for the Planet of the Apes
Part 7 "Tremor of Doom"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artists: Virgil Redondo

#29 (Feb 1977)
Future History Chronicles
"To Race the Death Winds"
Writer: Doug Moench
Artist: Tom Sutton

A WRITER ON THE PLANET OF THE APES

Writer **Doug Moench** looks back at Marvel's *Planet Of The Apes* magazine and working with Mike Ploog, Tom Sutton... and all of those apes.

AN INTERVIEW BY J. C. VAUGHN

Charlton Heston's likeness couldn't be used for Colonel Taylor. The man writing the adaptations didn't even see the fourth and fifth films in the series. The later adaptations changed artists between chapters, and the whole film series was over before the magazine even got started.

Why then is Marvel's *Planet of the Apes* magazine collected so avidly and remembered with such affection by its fans? The answer probably does not rest with the strip itself.

The recent 30th Anniversary re-issue of *Planet of the Apes* and its four sequels (*Beneath the Planet of the Apes, Escape from the Planet of the Apes, Conquest of the Planet of the Apes,* and *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*) stirred up great memories for long-time fans. The re-release and its surrounding hoopla also brought many newer fans into the fold.

With the films cleaned up, enhanced and restored, and with a brand new documentary about the series, it seemed apes fans had everything they wanted except the one thing they've wanted since 1973 when *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* ended: more.

The ill-fated TV series, the cartoon series, the toys, the novelizations... none of it has ever proved enough.

Like a somewhat cerebral, regularly bathed version of *Star Trek* fandom, *Apes* fans have talked about and sought the films and their related collectibles for years. The marketing arm at 20th Century Fox wasn't as savvy in those days as they later proved to be with *Aliens* and *Predator*, so while there are a lot of great apes items, there aren't as many collectibles as fans would like.

Unlike those and other properties, though, there's never been a fictional accounting of what life was like on the rest of the Planet of the Apes, how things got that way, and so on. Except in comics.

Marvel's *Planet of the Apes* was part of their old black and white magazine line that included *Deadly Hands of Kung-Fu, Dracula Lives, Savage Sword of Conan* and others. In this incarnation, fans got to see not only adaptations of the five films but exploits set in a variety of different regions, eras and conditions. Eventually the comic version even filled in the missing years between the fourth and fifth films.

The stories were generally (but not always) matched up: one chapter of an adaptation and one chapter of an original tale. Marvel's *Planet of the Apes* featured different environments, different artists, and different relationships between men and apes, but only one writer.

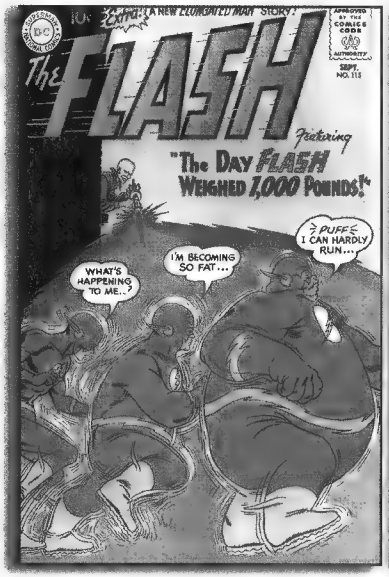
Veteran comics scribe Doug Moench is known to many Bronze Age collectors for his long run on Marvel's *Master of Kung-Fu* where his collaborations with artists Paul Gulacy, Mike Zeck, and Gene Day turned the book into a cult favorite. He also created and wrote a lengthy run on Marvel's *Moon Knight* and has had a long association with Batman, writing many of DC's Bat-titles including *Batman* and *Detective Comics*, as well as graphic novels and "Elseworlds" stories. Along the way he wrote just about every major Marvel character and developed his creator-owned *Six From Sirius* at Marvel's Epic line with fellow *Master of Kung-Fu* alumni Paul Gulacy.

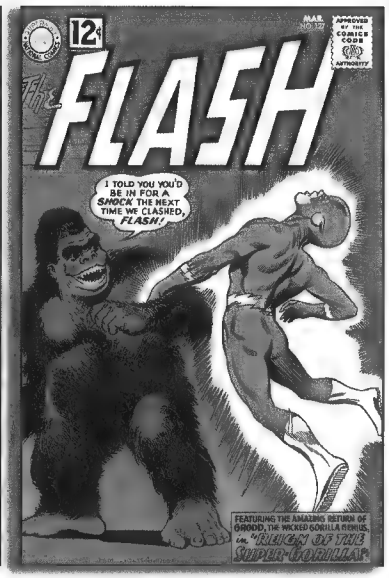
Moench, in addition to writing several Batman stories, is presently developing a conspiracy theory television program with *Homicide: Life on the Streets* star Richard Belzer. *CBM* asked him to turn back the clock and take a look at his work a quarter century ago on *Planet of the Apes*.

CBM: *You're noted as the driving force behind both Shang-chi,* Master of Kung-fu *and* Moon Knight. Master of Kung-fu *began around the same time as* Apes *while* Moon Knight *came much later. What was your background prior to* Apes*?*

MOENCH: I started with Warren which was of course *Creepy, Eerie* and *Vampirella*. Then for Skywald I did *Nightmare, Psycho* and some other titles. I had written for the *Chicago Sun Times* [Moench lived in Chicago at that point]. I sent some scripts to Archie Goodwin, who was editing the war comics at DC, and Joe Orlando, who was editing the horror titles like *House of Mystery.*

Actually, Archie was the editor at Warren when he bought my first story, *(Continued on page 54)*




12¢
The FLASH
I TOLD YOU YOU'D BE IN FOR A SHOCK THE NEXT TIME WE CLASHED, FLASH!
FEATURING THE AMAZING RETURN OF GRODD, THE WICKED GORILLA GENIUS, in "RACE OF THE SUPER-GORILLAS"

12¢
The FLASH
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THE FLASH ON THIS COVER—FORGET IT! THIS UNIFORM IS ALL THAT'S LEFT OF HIM!
GRODD PUTS THE SQUEEZE on FLASH!

Silver Age Sagas: SECRET

BY LOU MOUGIN

Grodd… everybody who read *Flash* during the Silver Age seems to remember his "force-of-mind" power, and his unceasing attempts to defeat the Scarlet Speedster. Yet, during the classic Infantino period, from *Showcase* #4 (1956) through *Flash* #174 (1967), the Super-Gorilla only appeared seven times! And he didn't show up on the cover until his fourth outing… in which he was not a gorilla. Go figure.

The Grodd Trilogy (considered by many DC aficionados as a Silver Age masterpiece) began in *The Flash* #106 (April/May 1959), with "Menace of the Super-Gorilla!" Writer John Broome, penciler Carmine Infantino, and inker Joe Giella handled this story, as they would all Grodd appearances in the classic era until issue #172, when Sid Greene inked Carmine.

This time, DC didn't skimp on the gorillas. They gave us an entire gorilla city.

The story involved a mysterious high-speed craft that even the Flash was hard-put to track, an entertainer who masqueraded as a gorilla and found that he had been kayoed and a real ape took his place, and, finally, a real gorilla who emerged from the super-speed vehicle. "The human called Flash saw my nuclear-powered craft but he didn't see me!" mused Grodd. "He knows nothing about me… or about the secret Gorilla-City in Africa where I come from!" We got a shot of that city, looking like one of Infantino's views of Ranagar in Adam Strange's strip.

As it was, Grodd was in search of "the greatest mind in the world," which belonged to an ape called Solovar. The latter had been captured by humans, caged, and put in a circus. To keep his city secret, Solovar was playing dumb, but Grodd didn't buy it. He leached from Solovar's mind the secret of "force of mind," a technique whereby others could be placed under mental control. Then he loped off, leaving Solovar to break out of his cage and seek the Flash.

Understandably, when Barry Allen saw Sol coming in …through his apartment window, his reaction was, "A—a gorilla coming in here?!" Nonetheless, Solovar was fluent in English, convinced Flash of his best intentions, and revealed, "[Grodd] intends to enslave my race and raise an army of gorillas—to help him take over the Earth!" That was all Flash

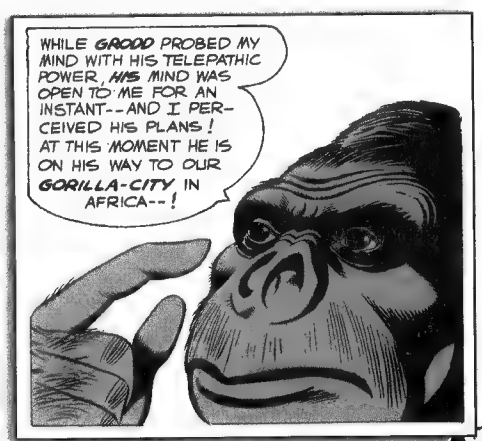
3 GRODD CLASSICS: #115 & #127 written by John Broome, penciled by Carmine Infantino, & inked by Joe Giella. #172 by Broome, Infantino, & Sid Greene.

SUPER-GORILLA GRODD became the undisputed top banana of DC's simian super-villains. Titano might beat him in size, but Grodd had super-intelligence and super-cunning. He was the Lex Luthor of the simian set and the leader of Flash's Rogues' Gallery… and his ultimate goal was to tyrannize Gorilla-City and destroy the Scarlet Speedster!

CITIES & SUPER-SIMIANS!

needed. He piggybacked Solovar to Gorilla-City, where Grodd had already established dominion over a bunch of helmeted and gun-toting gorillas. Since there was no Dr. Zaius around to lend a hand, the Flash took charge, attacked Grodd before he could unleash his force of mind, and upended him in a whirlpool of air. And that proved to be it for the simian tyrant, since, as Solovar explained, "The terrific spinning around you gave him… jolted loose the force of mind power!"

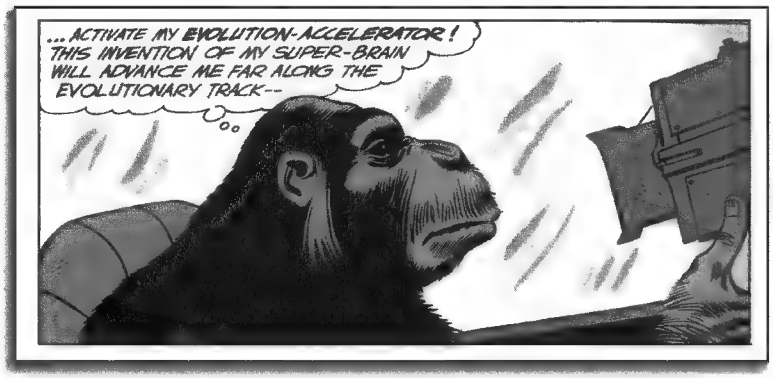
Promising to keep Gorilla-City a secret, the Flash took his


WHILE GRODD PROBED MY MIND WITH HIS TELEPATHIC POWER, HIS MIND WAS OPEN TO ME FOR AN INSTANT--AND I PERCEIVED HIS PLANS! AT THIS MOMENT HE IS ON HIS WAY TO OUR GORILLA-CITY IN AFRICA--!

SUPER-GORILLA GRODD!

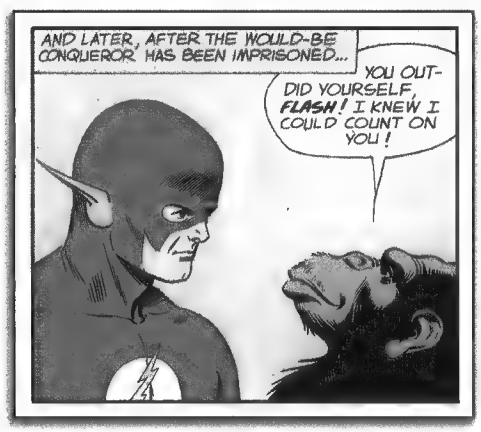
leave. But Gorilla Grodd was back in the next issue. And no, he didn't get a cover spot.

"Return of the Super-Gorilla" (*Flash* #107, June/July 1959) revealed that Grodd had escaped imprisonment and taken control of a race of underground bird-men, since his force of mind power had returned. Furthermore, Gorilla-City was shown to be guarded by illusion from prying eyes, and the story declared that the Earth is hollow, "except for the crust," and the bird-men lived on a floating island inside it. Armed with a devolutioner ray to return the high-aptitude apes to dumbness, Grodd was ready to rumble.



In the final story of the trilogy (Flash #108) the evil gorilla genius bathes in the rays of the evolution-accelerator.

So was Flash, but he got slowed down by a device which solidified the air around him. He managed to rock his way out of it and, after a short battle, knocked Grodd senseless with a hundred punches. The bird-men were freed, Grodd was imprisoned, and all was right in Central and Gorilla Cities once again.



After vanquishing Grodd in Flash #106, the Scarlet Speedster receives thanks from Solovar.

Until the next issue. *Flash* #108 (August/September 1959) finished up the Grodd Trilogy with "The Super-Gorilla's Secret Identity." Grodd escaped by mentally summoning his drilling Quadrimobile to smash into jail and spring him. Then he exposed himself to an evolution accelerator, became a human, called himself Drew Drowden, and went to Central City. After a week, he had made a killing in the stock market, built a factory whose only product was a pill, and took the pill. He gained mind-over-matter powers, and tested them out by making trees dance.

The Flash opposed Drowden, and was frozen in his tracks by the latter's power. But, when he upped his mental amperage to attempt the speedster's destruction, Drowden reverted back to his Grodd form, and lost his power. This time, the Grodd-Flash battle was a little more interesting, as the gorilla's physical power gave him the ability to resist Flash's assaults. But our hero melted the villain's evolutionary weapon and refashioned it into a pair of handcuffs, which he slapped around the monkey-maniac's wrists. Then it was back to the Gorilla-City hoosegow.

Grodd gets a cover?

Grodd took some time off after that, and didn't reappear until issue #115 (September 1960). This time he did get the cover, only he wasn't in his gorilla form… he had taken on the form of a human again, by killing his old body and transmitting his mind into the corpus of one William Dawson, who got a job training circus chimps. Solovar dialed up Flash on his handy vibratory aura number and put him on the case.

Grodd, as Dawson, was using his chimp charges to pull robberies, but the Crimson Comet caught the simians in the act and whisked them away. Incensed, the human Grodd hit upon the perfect graphic revenge on Flash: he trained a ray on him that turned him into a fat, 2000-pound slob in a red-and-yellow uniform. Then he erased Flash's memory, and turned him into a freak in a sideshow.

The plot worked until the fat Flash saw himself in a distortion mirror which revealed his former slim self, and memory, to him. He wobbled over to a potato chip factory, bullied his way into the dehydration room, and plumped himself down in amidst peeled spuds. Then he waited for the makeshift sauna to sweat about 1820 pounds off him. It worked, but he must have had the wettest uniform this side of Aquaman.

After that, Flash simply caught up with Dawson and whacked him so hard that the ex-gorilla kept bouncing up from the floor like a rebounding basketball, and running into another fist. This time, the ex-Grodd went into a human prison, since Flash had no reason to connect Dawson with his gorilla nemesis.

This time, Grodd did his short sentence in jail, and stayed out till issue #127. It seemed to work in his favor. When he came back, not only did he get a cover shot (shocking the daylights out of Flash), he actually got a story with some characterization.

"Dawson" got out of jail and, with $10 to his name, somehow made his way back to Gorilla-City in Africa. There, he found himself transformed back into his Gorilla Grodd form, skulked back into the city, saw a female ape named Boka, and fell in love. Yep—all by himself, Grodd had launched the much-neglected Ape Romance genre in comics.

THE TERRIFIC SPINNING AROUND YOU GAVE HIM DIDN'T HURT HIM ANY, BUT ONE THING IT DID DO--IT JOLTED LOOSE THE FORCE OF MIND POWER! HE DOESN'T POSSESS IT ANYMORE!

The fetching femme-ape in question was to marry Solovar, but Grodd bathed himself in "neo-magnetic radiation which will {make}... anyone who looks at me admire me—instantly an uncontrollably!" Thus armed, the charismatic Grodd showed himself to Boka, who left Solovar waiting figuratively on the church steps and threw herself at the newcomer. On top of that, all the gorillas in the city suddenly thought of Grodd as a nice guy, welcomed him back, and made him king.

But that wasn't enough. Grodd decided, "...this being king of Gorilla-City is just small bananas!," and returned to the world of humans... where he ran for Governor.

Grodd apparently had no image problems with being a foreign-born ape, because he became the People's Choice in a short while with his "neo-magnetism," and was the front-runner, leading one to speculate that Central City may be part of Minnesota. Even Flash became a Grodd-groover, to his dismay, only to learn that the ape's appeal waned when he was over 100 miles away from him. Grodd, unworried, lay in bed reading his fan mail, and planned a run on the presidency once he got in the governor's mansion.

Flash put his scientist's mind to work, learned that solar flares weakened Grodd's neo-magnetism, and used a vibratory trick to duplicate the radiation in himself. Thus shielded, our hero came to grips with the ape-ticket candidate, spun him into the air, and watched him come down hard. Once Grodd was kayoed, his charisma-power faded, and the first unbiased opinion from the electorate came back: "Ugh! It's a gorilla! And an ugly one at that!" So Flash brought Grodd back to a Gorilla-City cell, and, at Grodd campaign headquarters, one manager ripped a poster apart, asking, "Running a gorilla for governor? How did we get hoodwinked into a thing like that, Denby?"

"I dunno, boss," replied an underling. "It—it seemed like a good idea at the time!"

The Gauntlet of Super-Villains

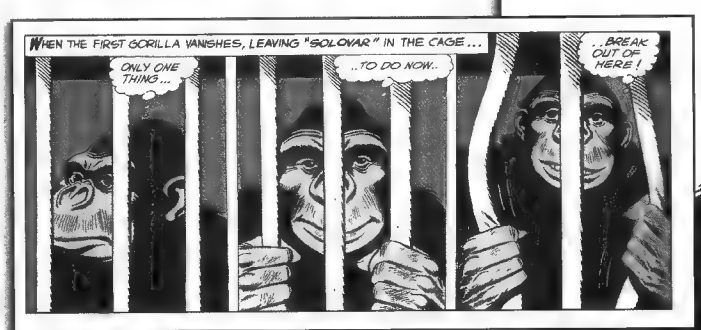
The Apegate scandal kept Grodd out of the public eye for some years, during which time he probably wrote his memoirs. It wasn't until September, 1965 that he returned, as the ace-in-the-hole of "The Gauntlet of Super-Villains" (*Flash* #155). Captain Cold, Mirror Master, the Pied Piper, the Top, Captain Boomerang, and Heat-Wave made the cover, but... as usual... Grodd was kept offstage.

Flash found himself facing all the above-mentioned villains, and discovered his speed was slacking off due to a strange radiation. It developed that Grodd had transferred his mind into the body of Freddy, a gorilla at Central City Zoo, whose mate, Pola, was getting concerned with her lover's inattentiveness. Grodd/Freddy had taken mental control over Gorilla-City, had escaped the zoo, and was planning to (you guessed it) rule the

Solovar and Flash solve the riddle of stopping Grodd's force-of-mind power.

Grodd's first closeup in comic book history.

Gorilla-City leader, Solovar, escapes from the circus. (All panels from Flash #106.)



SUPER-GORILLA GRODD!

world. But Flash employed Pola as a tracker, defeated the human villains, and closed on Grodd.

Unfortunately for Flash, his speed had by now been sapped enough for Grodd to overpower him, and things looked grim for the swift one. That is, until Grodd dropped a comment about making Boka his queen. At that, Pola went on the attack: "So there's another female in your life!? I should have known it!"

Grodd's classic Flash appearances:

All stories by John Broome, Carmine Infantino, and Joe Giella except for #172, by Broome, Infantino, and Sid Greene.

The Flash #106, Apr/May 1959: "Menace of the Super-Gorilla" (15 pgs)

The Flash #107, Jun/Jul 1959: "Return of the Super-Gorilla" (15 pgs)

The Flash #108, Aug/Sep 1959: "Super-Gorilla's Secret Identity" (14 pgs)

The Flash #115, Sep 1960: "The Day Flash Weighed 1,000 Pounds" (13 pgs)

The Flash #127, Mar 1962: "The Reign of the Super-Gorilla" (15 pgs)

The Flash #155, Sep 1965: "The Gauntlet of Super-Villains" (24 pgs)

The Flash #172, Aug 1967: "Grodd Puts the Squeeze On Flash" (13 pgs)

And after Grodd was softened up enough by her pummeling mitts, Flash stepped in and delivered the super-speed coup de grace. Grodd once more found himself back in stir in Gorilla-City, lamenting, "I'm beginning to think that humans know what they're talking about when they say… the female of the species is deadlier than the male!"

Grodd made one last classic appearance, in *Flash* #172 (August 1972). It was obvious he was griped about having missed so many cover appearances. This time, he was on the cover. But the Flash wasn't, unless you counted the empty uniform Grodd was holding up beside himself.

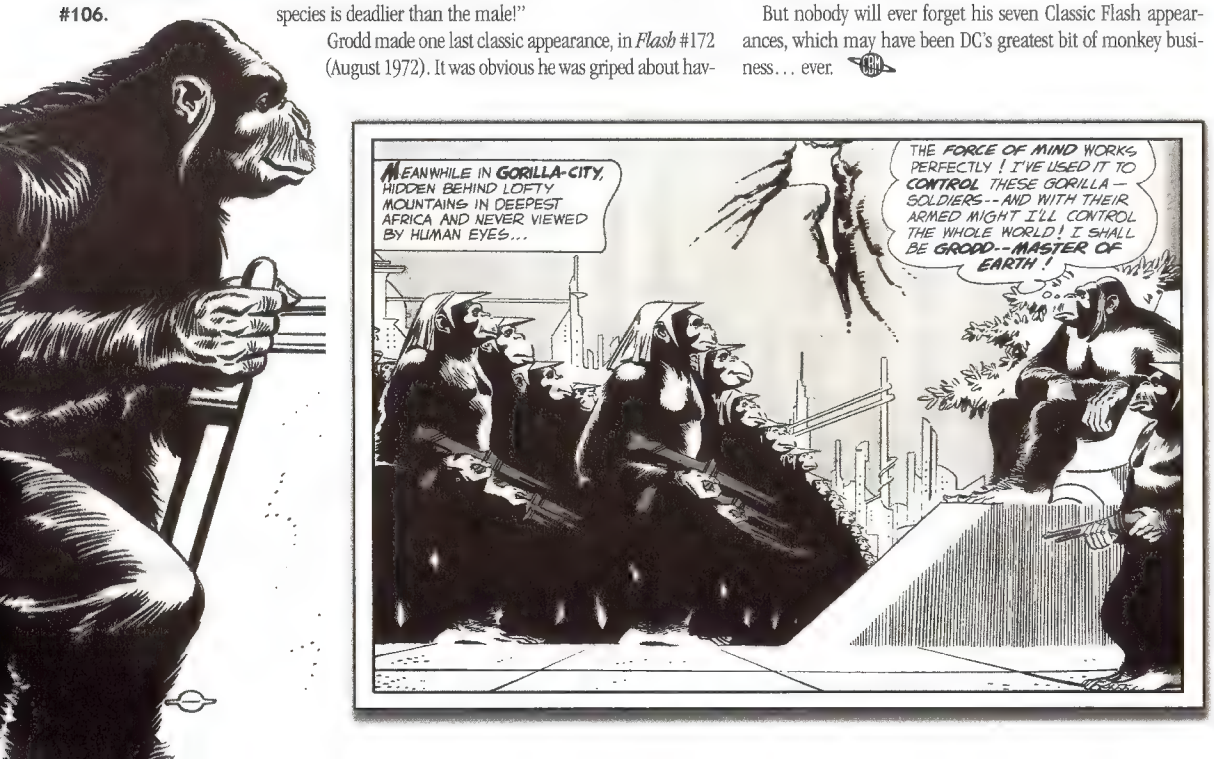
"Grodd Puts the Squeeze On Flash," inked neatly by the late Sid Greene, opened with everyone in Central City being speeded up at such a rate that a scientist expressed the fear that their lifespans would be shortened enough to have them all drop dead by sundown. Grodd claimed it was his doing, and bargained for Flash to set him free from jail and bring him to Central City in return for undoing the speed-plague. The acceleration wasn't really his doing, being a freak occurrence, but the apemeister bluffed the world anyway, saying that he had to be accepted as ruler of Earth, or all the world's population would speed up and die.

Flash confronted Grodd, who explained the cover shot by grabbing hold of the speedster and gorilla-hugging him until only his limp uniform remained in his grip. However, Flash had only vibrated out of his suit, circling back to clout the gorilla bad-guy smartly. Then it was back to a Gorilla-City cell for Grodd, and that was his last hurrah in the classic era. Infantino left Flash two issues later, to become DC's editorial director.

Grodd did make repeat appearances in *Flash* #209, 294, 295, 313, 327, 329-331, and the 1978 Flash Spectacular (*DC Special Series* #11). He also served as a member of the Secret Society of Super-Villains, fought Superman in *Action* #424 and 443, and made his last appearance in the old DC Universe in *Crisis On Infinite Earths* #9. Since then, his new DC Earth counterpart has popped up in various comics.

But nobody will ever forget his seven Classic Flash appearances, which may have been DC's greatest bit of monkey business… ever.

Gorilla soldiers assemble before Grodd in Gorilla-City in a futuristic panel from Flash #106.


MEANWHILE IN GORILLA-CITY, HIDDEN BEHIND LOFTY MOUNTAINS IN DEEPEST AFRICA AND NEVER VIEWED BY HUMAN EYES...
THE FORCE OF MIND WORKS PERFECTLY! I'VE USED IT TO CONTROL THESE GORILLA—SOLDIERS--AND WITH THEIR ARMED MIGHT I'LL CONTROL THE WHOLE WORLD! I SHALL BE GRODD--MASTER OF EARTH!

AMAZING SCIENCE-FICTION TALES!
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IT'S FANTASTIC – BUT DR. SARCOIN'S BRAIN-EXCHANGE EXPERIMENT HAS SUCCEEDED! I'M STILL CAPTAIN COMET – BUT MY MIND IS IMPRISONED WITHIN THE BODY OF A GORILLA!
IK! IK!

HERE IS THE GATEWAY TO OTHER WORLDS...WEIRD WONDERS!
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MEMBERS OF THE JURY, I WILL PROVE THAT THIS ARE HAS A HUMAN BRAIN AND THAT HE COMMITTED DELIBERATE MURDER!

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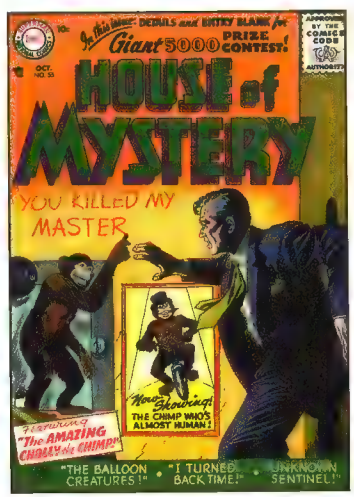
WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE THE ONLY HUMAN BEING IN – THE GORILLA WORLD!"
INCREDIBLE! THIS PUNY CREATURE IS THE MISSING LINK BETWEEN APE AND ANIMAL!

MYSTERY IN SPACE
WHO WILL BE THE FIRST PIONEERS TO TRAVEL FROM EARTH TO ANOTHER PLANET? FOR THE STARTLING ANSWER
Read "MONTY-ROCKET TO MARS!"
WELCOME, EARTHMEN, TO THE PLANET MARS!
IK! IK!

STRANGE ADVENTURES
Featuring "GORILLAS IN SPACE!"
EARTHMEN ARE PREPARING TO LAUNCH THEIR FIRST SATELLITE INTO SPACE – BUT WE GORILLAS BEAT THEM TO IT!

ALL NEW STORIES
TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED
I TELL you, I am James Starr, the missing scientist! You've got to believe me!
THE WHOLE THING'S INCREDIBLE – BUT THAT GORILLA'S HANDWRITING IS EXACTLY THE SAME AS STARR'S!
...and the results of my experiments have been startling! James Starr
Featuring the GORILLA WHO SAVED ME!

ALL NEW STORIES
STRANGE ADVENTURES
Featuring "The GORILLA CONQUEST of EARTH!"
EDWARD SMITH, YOU HAVE BEEN CONVICTED OF SPYING ON OUR "PROJECT GORILLA", AND SO YOU MUST PAY THE PENALTY!


In This Issue: DETAILS and ENTRY BLANK for Giant 5000 PRIZE CONTEST!
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YOU KILLED MY MASTER
Now Showing! THE CHIMP WHO'S ALMOST HUMAN!
Featuring "The AMAZING CHALLY the CHIMP!"
"THE BALLOON CREATURES!" • "I TURNED BACK TIME!" • "UNKNOWN SENTINEL!"

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YOU WILL NOW PUT THOSE BOOKS INSIDE THIS VALISE!
WHEN I READ THESE THREE NOVELS I CAN CONQUER THE WORLD!
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I DON'T KNOW WHY—BUT THAT STRANGE MUSIC IS FORCING US TO GIVE MONEY TO THE ORGAN-GRINDER'S MONKEY!
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Featuring "I WAS A PRISONER in a HUMAN ZOO!"

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TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED
HELP, OFFICER! HELP! THAT GREEN GORILLA! IT'S FOLLOWING ME AROUND EVERYWHERE!
HE CAN'T HELP YOU! NOBODY CAN SEE OR HEAR ME EXCEPT YOU!
Featuring "The GREEN GORILLA!"

HOUSE of SECRETS
EXPERIMENT 7009
THERE'S YOUR LABORATORY FREAK, PROFESSOR—SHOOT HIM DOWN BEFORE HE GETS AWAY WITH THE STOLEN FORMULA!
WAIT! DON'T SHOOT! LET ME EXPLAIN!

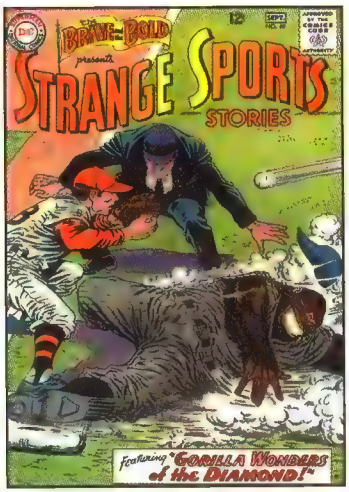
STRANGE ADVENTURES
Featuring: The GORILLA WAR AGAINST EARTH!
DO YOU GORILLAS SERIOUSLY THINK YOU CAN CONQUER THE EARTH?
YES—WITH A SUPER-WEAPON YOU HUMANS HAVE NEVER DREAMED OF!
THE LIE DETECTOR SHOWS HE'S YELLING THE TRUTH!

HOUSE of SECRETS
PROCEED WITH YOUR QUESTION!
YOUR CATEGORY IS: HUMANS—AND YOU HAVE NOW REACHED THE $200,000 PLATEAU!
"WE MATCHED WITS WITH A GORILLA GENIUS!"

STRANGE ADVENTURES
WE THE JURY FIND THE DEFENDANT GUILTY—
I'M INNOCENT, I TELL YOU! INNOCENT!
GUILTY!
Featuring "THE AMAZING TRIAL of JOHN (GORILLA) DOE!"

STRANGE ADVENTURES
Featuring The HUMAN PET of GORILLA LAND!
IT'S OUR SON'S BIRTHDAY—AND HE WANTS THAT HUMAN CREATURE FOR A PRESENT!
PLEASE GET IT FOR ME! IT'S SO CUTE!

10¢
STRANGE ADVENTURES
STOP! DR. HORNE IS A FRAUD AND A THIEF! HE STOLE HIS IDEAS FROM ME!
... AND WINNER OF THE NATIONAL SCIENCE ACADEMY AWARD IS DR. VAN HORNE...
featuring "CHALLENGE OF THE GORILLA GENIUS!"



HAWKMAN
GOT TO GRIND MY JAWS UP BEFORE THAT MISSING PIECE COMES CRASHING DOWN!
THRILL TO THE MOST AMAZING BATTLES EVER FOUGHT—IN "THE WORLD WHERE EVOLUTION RAN WILD!"

THE MAN WITH THE PUNISHER EMBLEM
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DON'T BREATHE IN THESE FUMES FROM MY WITCH'S BREW, HUMANS—OR YOU WILL LIVE TO REGRET IT AS OTHERS HAVE!

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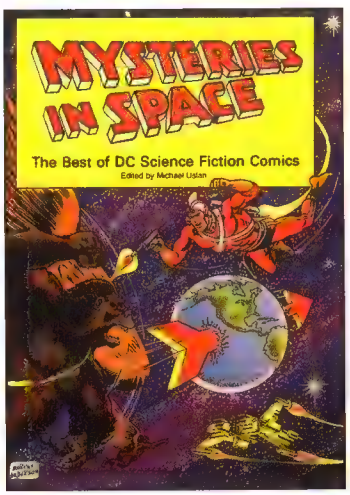

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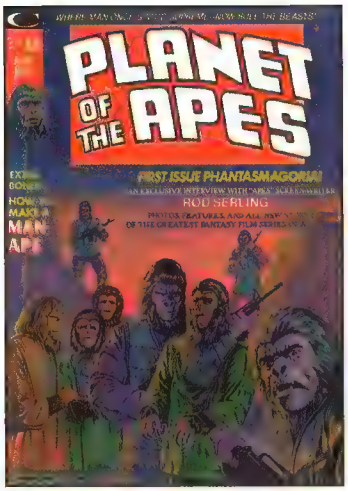
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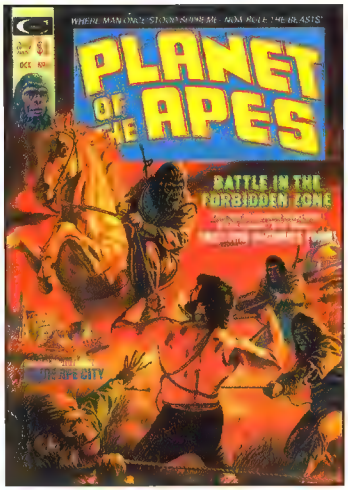
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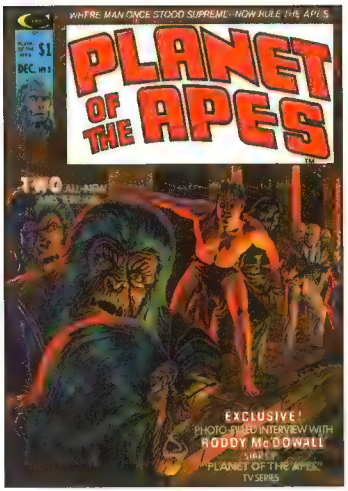
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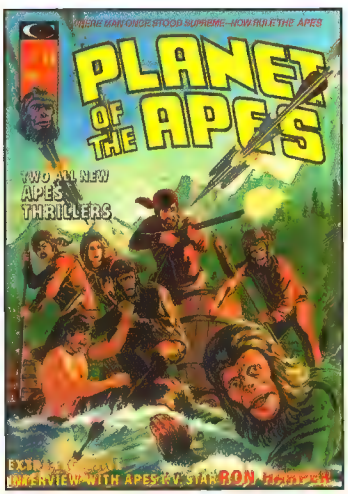
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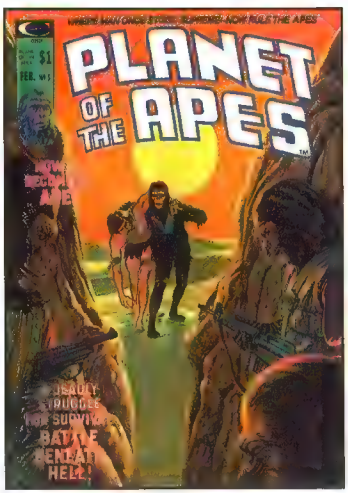
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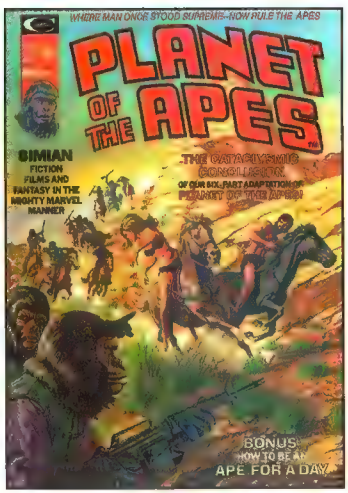
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HOW TO BE AN
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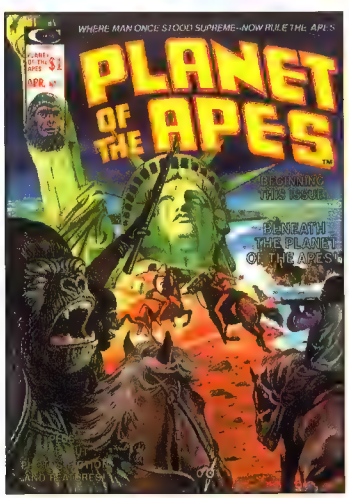
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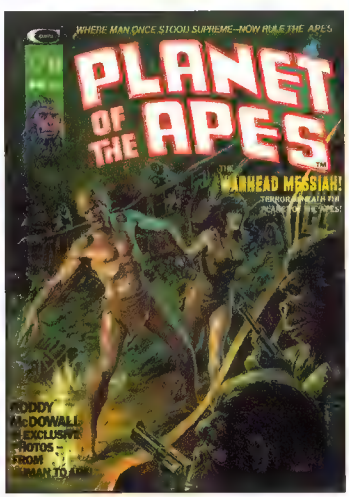
BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES!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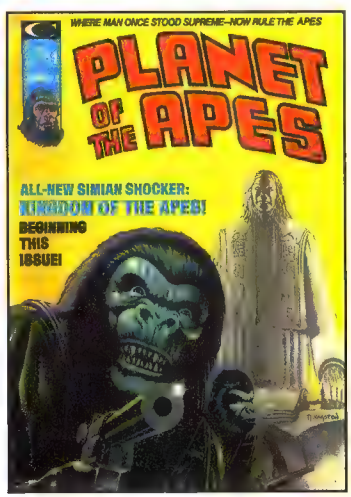
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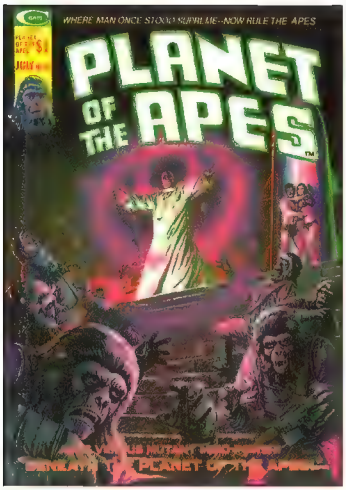
ISSUE!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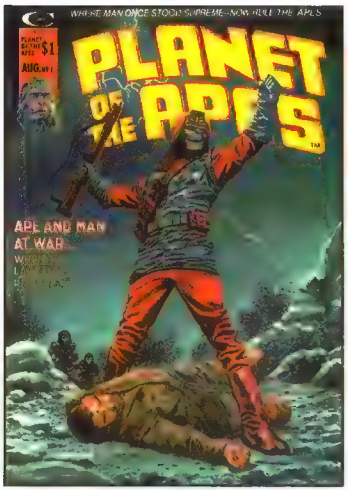
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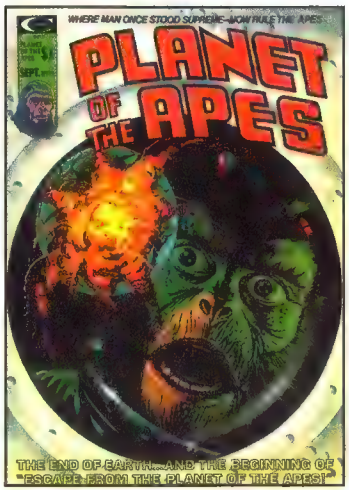
APE AND MAN AT WAR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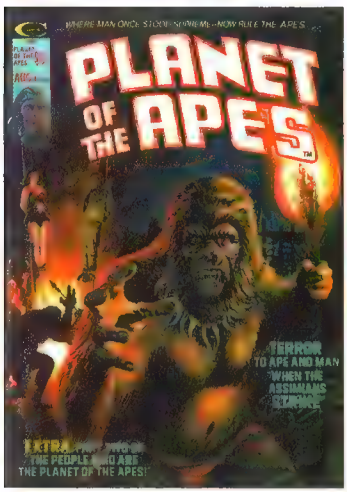
THE END OF EARTH....AND THE BEGINNING OF
"ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES!"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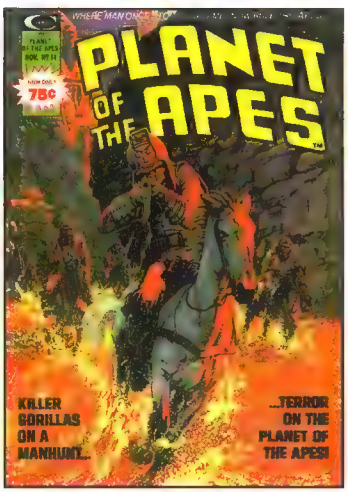
TERROR TO APE AND MAN WHEN THE ASSIMANS STRIKE!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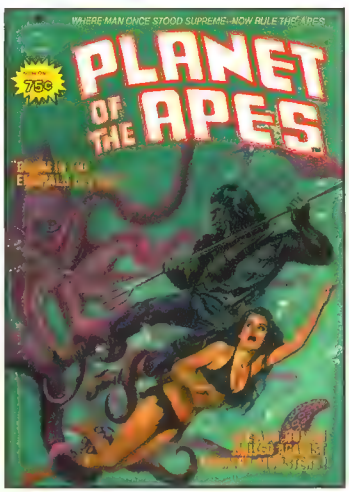
KILLER GORILLAS ON A MANHUNT...
...TERROR ON THE PLANET OF THE APES!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PLANET OF THE APES
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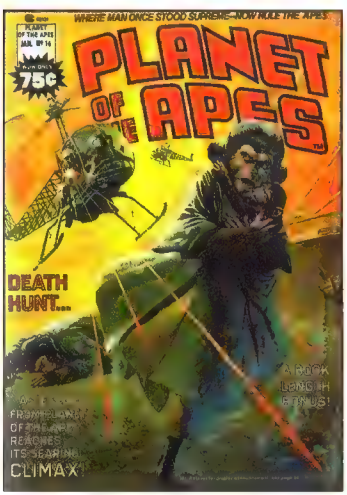
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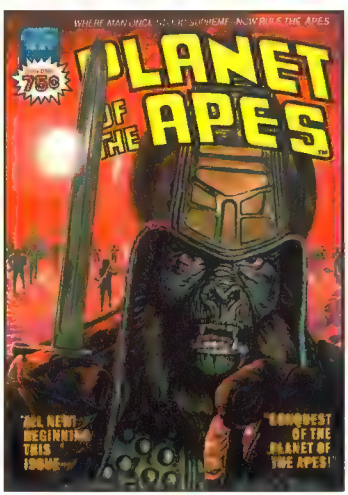
DEATH HUNT...
CLIMAX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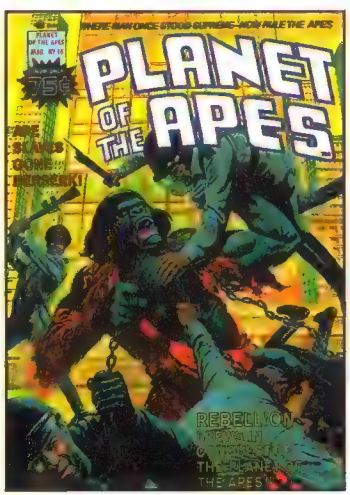
"ALL NEW! BEGINNING THIS ISSUE..."
"CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES!"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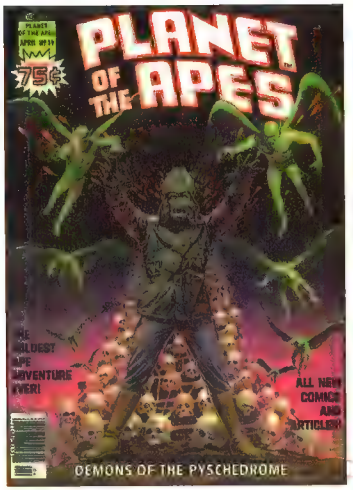
REBELLION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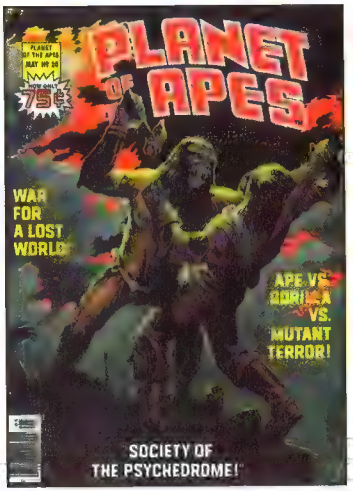
DEMONS OF THE PYSCHEDROME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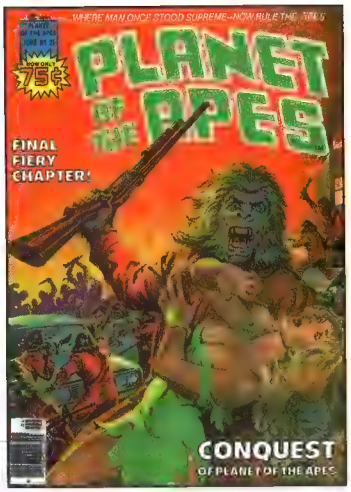
WAR FOR A LOST WORLD
APE VS GORILLA VS. MUTANT TERROR!
SOCIETY OF THE PSYCHEDROME!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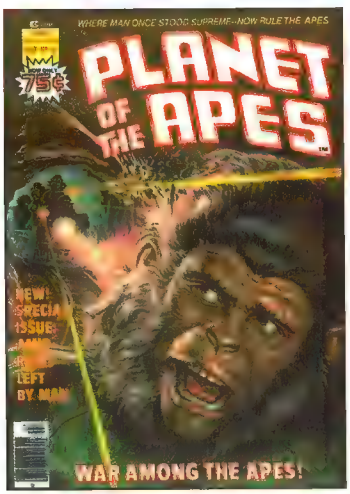
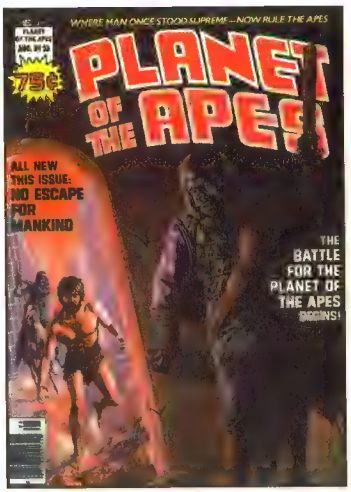
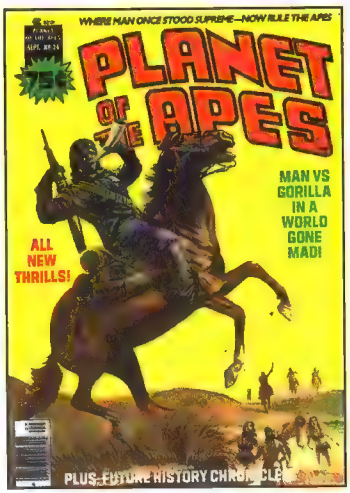
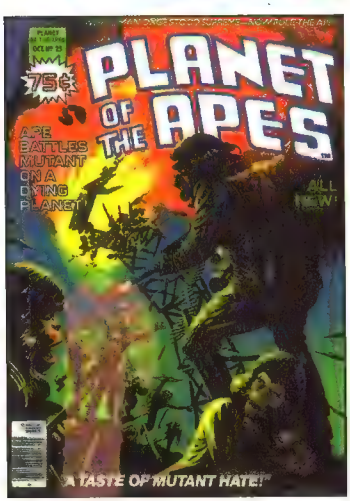
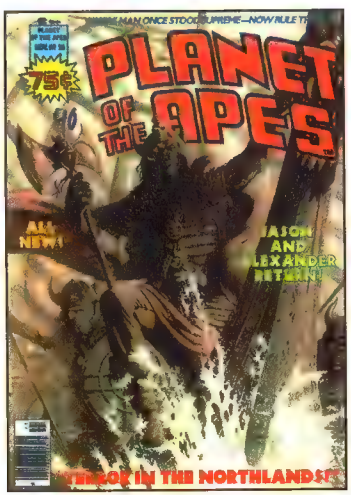
PLANET OF THE APES
75¢
FINAL FIERY CHAPTER!
CONQUEST
OF PLANET OF THE APES

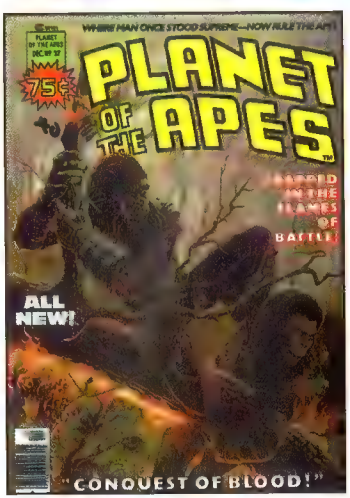

WHERE MAN ONCE STOOD SUPREME--NOW RULE THE APES
PLANET OF THE APES
75¢
WAR AMONG THE APES!

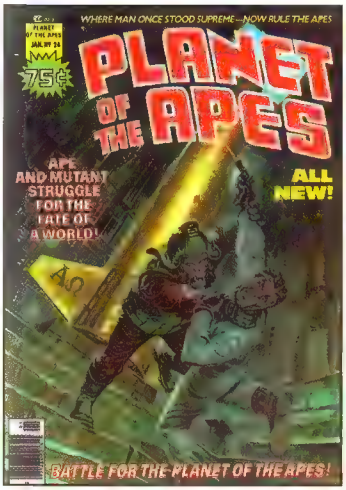

WHERE MAN ONCE STOOD SUPREME--NOW RULE THE APES
PLANET OF THE APES
75¢
ALL NEW THIS ISSUE: NO ESCAPE FOR MANKIND
THE BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES BEGINS!

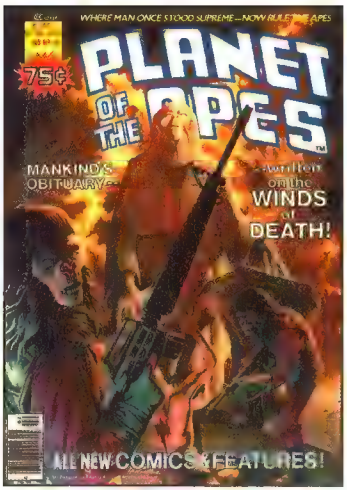

WHERE MAN ONCE STOOD SUPREME--NOW RULE THE APES
PLANET OF THE APES
75¢
ALL NEW THRILLS!
MAN VS GORILLA IN A WORLD GONE MAD!

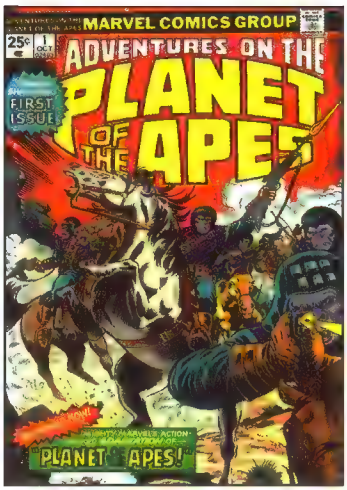

PLANET OF THE APES
75¢
APE BATTLES MUTANT ON A DYING PLANET!
A TASTE OF MUTANT HATE!

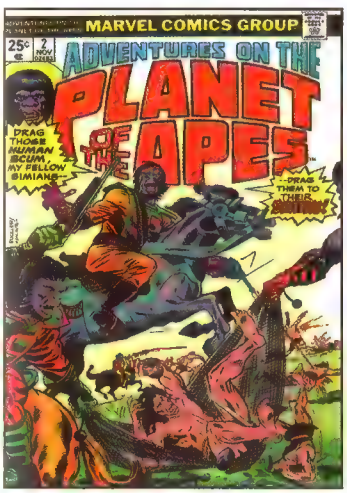

PLANET OF THE APES
75¢
ALL NEW!
TERROR IN THE NORTHLANDS!


WHERE MAN ONCE STOOD SUPREME--NOW RULE THE APES
PLANET OF THE APES
75¢
ALL NEW!
"CONQUEST OF BLOOD!"


WHERE MAN ONCE STOOD SUPREME—NOW RULE THE APES
PLANET OF THE APES
75¢
APE AND MUTANT STRUGGLE FOR THE FATE OF A WORLD!
ALL NEW!
BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES!


WHERE MAN ONCE STOOD SUPREME—NOW RULE THE APES
75¢
PLANET OF THE APES
MANKIND'S OBITUARY
on the WINDS of DEATH!
ALL NEW COMICS FEATURES!

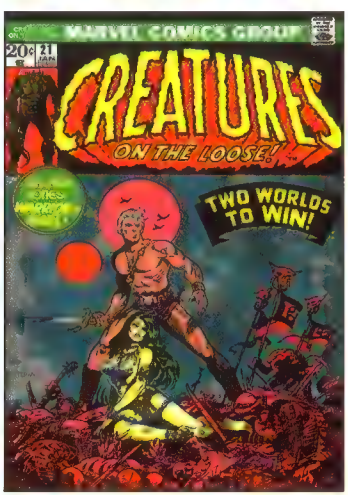

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
ADVENTURES ON THE PLANET OF THE APES
FIRST ISSUE
PLANET APES!

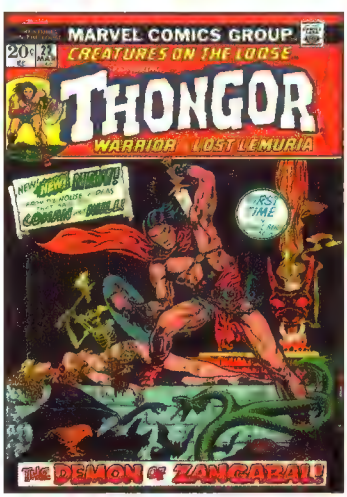

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
ADVENTURES ON THE PLANET OF THE APES
DRAG THOSE HUMAN SCUM MY FELLOW SIMIANS—
—DRAG THEM TO THEIR DOOM!

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
ADVENTURES ON THE PLANET OF THE APES
MAN-HUNT!
THEN IF WE MUST... WE'LL TAKE YOU IN DEAD!
FILTHY ANIMALS! YOU'LL NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE!

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
ADVENTURES ON THE PLANET OF THE APES
THE DEFENDANT HAS BEEN FOUND GUILTY!
AND THE SENTENCE IS DEATH!
DIRTY ANIMALS! YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!
I SWEAR I'LL AVENGE MY BROTHERS!
TRIAL BY FEAR!

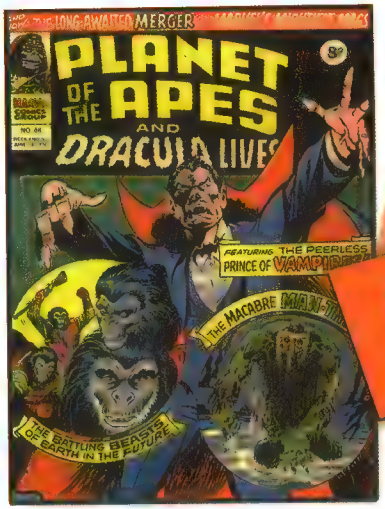
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
ADVENTURES ON THE PLANET OF THE APES
DR. ZAIUS— THE HUMANS HAVE LEARNED OUR WAYS AND HAVE DECEIVED US!
THEN OUR DOOM IS SEALED!
THEY MUST NOT BE PERMITTED TO LEAVE HERE ALIVE!
FURY IN THE FORBIDDEN ZONE!

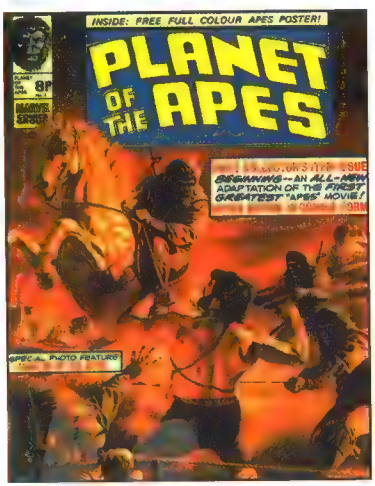

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
CREATURES ON THE LOOSE!
TWO WORLDS TO WIN!

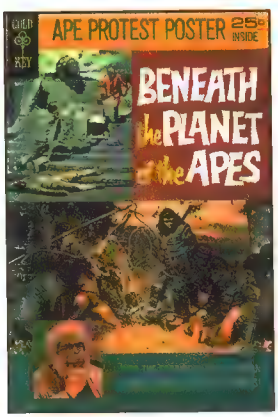

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
CREATURES ON THE LOOSE
THONGOR
WARRIOR LOST LEMURIA
THE DEMON OF ZANGABAL!

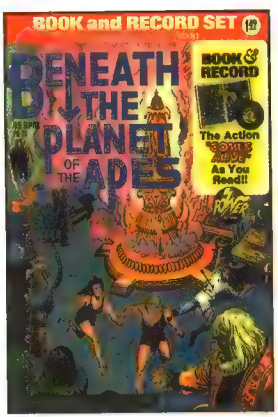
COLLECTING PLANET OF THE APES

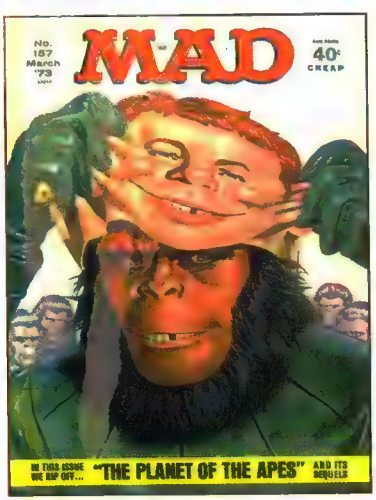
By Terry Hoknes


THE LONG AWAITED MERGER
PLANET OF THE APES AND DRACULA LIVES
FEATURING THE PEERLESS PRINCE OF VAMPIRES
THE MACABRE MAN-APE
THE BATTLING BEASTS OF EARTH IN THE FUTURE!

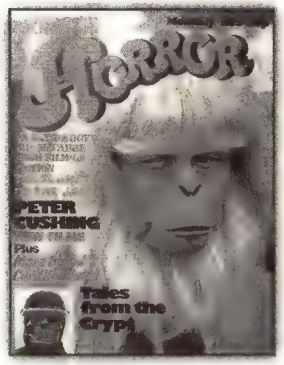

INSIDE: FREE FULL COLOUR APES POSTER!
PLANET OF THE APES
BEGINNING -- AN ALL-NEW ADAPTATION OF THE FIRST, GREATEST "APES" MOVIE!
SPECIAL PHOTO FEATURE

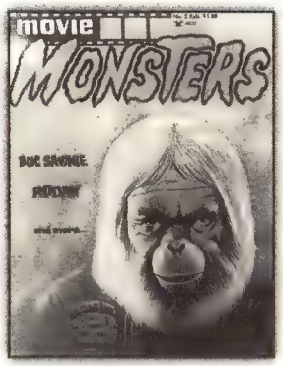


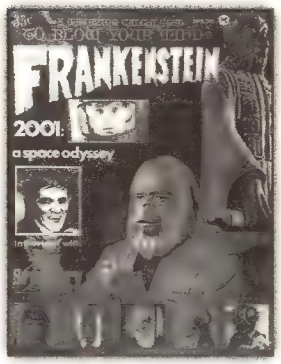




POTA & Dracula Lives #88, British *POTA* #1, *MAD* #157, *Beneath the POTA* #30044-012, *Beneath the POTA* book & record set, *Adv. on the POTA* #11, and *Mighty World of Marvel* #231.

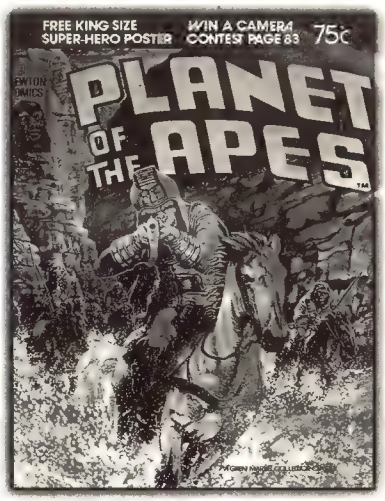






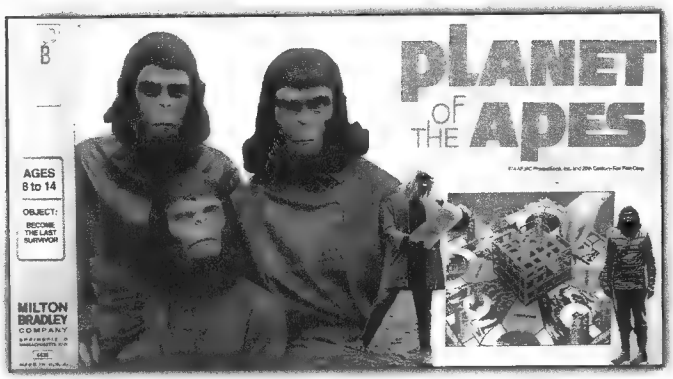
***World of Horror* #5 (1975), *Movie Monsters* #2 (1975), *Castle of Frankenstein* #13 (1969), *Famous Monsters of Filmland* #85 (1971).**

The first Planet of the Apes comic book adaptation came in late 1970 after the second film, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, was a huge hit. Gold Key had a series called *Movie Comics* which ran from 1962 to 1972 and featured over 50 movies adapted into comics. The *Beneath the POTA* issue is one of the most popular and valuable of the 10-year series. The comic book is numbered 30044-012, dated December 1970, has a photo cover, and came with a bound-in poster. This is the very first *Planet of the Apes* comic and is the scarcest and most valuable of the regularly distributed POTA comics. The Gold Key comic would have been the only ape comic produced if not for the hype of the new TV series in 1974. Marvel jumped on the bandwagon early and released a bi-monthly black and white comic magazine titled *Planet of the Apes* (#1 August 1974). Issue #2 was published before the TV series even debuted. The magazine run lasted until #29 (February 1977) and to this date is the longest-running POTA publishing project in US history. 1969-1975 was a popular time for horror and mystery books by Marvel which gave them good reason to publish POTA as a "monster" book. Secondly 1973-1975 was the peak period of Marvel's black and white magazines. Marvel had 19 different titles published during these years. By lasting 29 issues, *POTA* was one of the most successful magazine titles for Marvel. It was surpassed only by *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* (33 issues), *Crazy* (94 issues), and *Savage Sword of Conan* (235 issues ending in 1995). The Planet of the Apes magazine contained comic versions of the films, new stories written by Doug Moench and art by Mike Ploog. It also contained articles, reviews, and interviews. The magazine was so popular that it became a monthly with issue #3. Now, 25 years later, this series is collected by a fairly large population. Because it is movie and TV related, many collect the Marvel magazines who are not regular comic book hobbyists. Marvel completists want the series, as do fans of the art of Mike Ploog. Ploog's original pencil artwork is highly collectible and was selling for $175 a page back in 1992; now it rarely turns up. Marvel Comics was also involved in a series of comic book/45-rpm record sets during the height of the Bronze Age from 1974 to 1978. The 31 sets contained mostly reprints of previously published Marvel stories. The 7x10" comics were 20 pages and each came with a record narrated, with characters and sound effects, costing $1.49. Four of the Apes movies (not *Conquest* for some strange reason) were released and are quite visually appealing... and were the first color POTA comics published by Marvel. At the same time as magazine #14, Marvel decided to reprint the stories from the movies in color in a regular comic format for 25¢ rather than the hefty $1 price tag of the mags. The comic series *Adventures On The Planet Of The Apes* lasted 11 issues (until December 1976)... just long enough to reprint the complete stories of the first two films. POTA fans could see apes in print twice a month during this time. In 1976 Marvel produced a trial run of most



Planet of the Apes #17 (Aug 1976, Newton), Planeta Dos Macacos #5 (date unknown, Brazil).

of their titles in various cities with a price change. *Adventures On The Planet Of The Apes* #5, 6, and 7 all have variant cover price editions. These are definitely the rarest POTA comics ever made and these variants just "never turn up"! By the time the cartoon series debuted, sales were already sagging and the magazine was reduced in both page-count and price with #14 (November 1975). POTA was very well-publicized and Marvel was busy promoting POTA worldwide. I have confirmed that there was a *POTA* comic series in Brazil, Australia, and Sweden. The Americans were happy with their 11 comics and 29 magazines but in the UK there were 139 comics published! For seven pence fans could buy the weekly *POTA* comic which debuted on October 26, 1974. The British series was, in general, just a slimmed down reprint version of the US magazine. The number of pages and content was only a third of the US version though the UK comics had fascinating new covers and a letter section from UK fans which was very intriguing. The UK books are 1" higher and ½" wider than the US magazines. However, the UK books were not all Ape material. There were always backup stories of other reprinted US Marvel characters that had nothing to do with POTA. The Planet Of The Apes title changed when sales declined. The series was combined with another title… Dracula Lives, so the mag was then called *Planet Of The Apes And Dracula Lives* starting with issue #88 (June 23, 1976) priced eight pence an issue. (In the US, *Dracula Lives* debuted in 1973 lasting 13 issues until July 1975. It was the first of the 19 Marvel magazines to be published). The *POTA/DL* comic lasted 36 issues ending with #123 (February 1977).



Milton Bradley POTA board game (1974?).

By 1977 the horror genre had faltered and Marvel canceled all their horror titles. The apes lost their starring role and were joined with another Marvel "monster," The Incredible Hulk. They shared cover appearances in The *Mighty World Of Marvel* starting with issue #231 (March 2, 1977), and lasting 16 issues until June 15, 1977 when POTA made its last appearance in the UK. In the UK, hardcover annuals featuring original stories, art and comic strips have always been popular. Publisher Brown And Watson took advantage of this by publishing three *POTA* annuals from 1975-1977. The first annual (1975) featured a balanced mixture of text articles, original comic strips, and text stories all based on the TV series. Some common POTA publicity color photos were included. There are also some b&w text illustrations done by an uncredited John Bolton (of Batman fame). The second annual (1976) had no text articles and no photos. It did however have more comic strips and original stories, plus activity pages for kids. These included dot-to-dots, cut-out figures, coloring pages, etc. Again, uncredited b&w illustrations by John Bolton were included. The third and final UK annual (1977) was aimed at an even younger audience and was the most interesting of all. It includes two superb drawings by John Bolton (comparable to the best work of Mike Ploog). Also the text stories are illustrated with stills from all five movies, many of which have probably never been reproduced anywhere

PLANET OF THE APES TIMELINE

1963 *Monkey Planet* by Pierre Boulle is published

1965 Charlton Heston is hired for the lead in the role of a new film *Planet Of The Apes* written by Rod Serling and Michael Wildon

1968 *Planet of the Apes* debuts in theatres on February 8th

1969 1st official merchandise Topps Bubblegum cards

1970 *Beneath The Planet Of The Apes* debuts, and is adapted for the first POTA comic book

1971 *Escape From The Planet Of The Apes* debuts

1972 *Conquest Of The Planet Of The Apes* debuts

1973 *Battle For The Planet Of The Apes* debuts

1973 The first three films are shown on TV and receive the largest recorded viewership for sci-fi movies ever on TV. Apemania sweeps the country

1974 Anticipation for a new POTA TV series leads to mass marketing of merchandise by dozens of companies. Items include cards, toys, books, puzzles, dolls, etc.

1974 Marvel Comics in the US and UK start ongoing magazine-format comic

1975 The cartoon series *Return Of The Planet Of The Apes* debuts

1977 All POTA products are discontinued

1982 The TV series is reformatted into TV movies by combining two episodes into a single 90-minute film

else. Due to the reprint nature of the weekly UK comics they were not sold in the US for copyright reasons and vice versa with the US books. The first issue of the US magazine did ship to England since the UK series did not start until two months later. *The Adventures on The Planet Of The Apes* series did not get distributed in the UK at all. The weekly comics and the hardcover annuals are surprisingly scarce... even in their home country! They are, naturally, very rare in North America because they were never distributed here. These are always overlooked and undervalued. In April 1990 publisher Adventure Comics (Malibu Graphics) started a new series of original Planet of the Apes stories. The first issue was a surprise hit with Dale "Hulk" Keown cover art and had to be printed three times. The bi-monthly series was quickly changed into a monthly ongoing series due to the overwhelming sales of the first issue. With a hit on their hands Adventure Comics put out a line of spinoff mini-series based on the POTA concept with different creative teams on every series. Writer Charles Marshall even wrote a series entitled Ape Nation which contained concepts from POTA and Alien Nation in one series. They also put out four graphic novels including three which reprint the movie adaptations from the Marvel magazines. POTA became possibly the biggest success for the small publisher lasting until March 1993. Out of all the POTA comics the Adventure Comics releases are criticized for being of lower quality and for drifting away from the original concept, however, Adventure should be thanked for breathing new life into a title that had not seen print for 13 years. In fact Adventure Comics put out 56 POTA releases, and holds the distinction of putting out more POTA products than any other company in US history. Outside of the regular POTA titles were a few parodies of the Apes. *MAD* #157 did a 10-page spoof and cover story on March 1973. *Cracked* #123 also featured an Apes parody cover story in 1975. *Apes Chronicles* was the fanzine of the International Planet Of The Apes Fan Club. In its pages they published their own POTA comic strip starring the ape, Veetus created by Jeff Krueger. The strip ran 35 episodes from 1992-1994. Another POTA fanzine, *Ape Crazy*, started in 1993 and ran seven issues. Created by Mark and Tim Wasylyszyn, *Crazy* also featured original comic strips: #6 featured an eight-pager titled "Adventures On The Planet Of The Apes" by Jerry Brown, and #7 offered another Brown eight-pager "Trouble On The Planet Of The Apes." Also of note is the Brazilian POTA fanzine *Century City News* by Luiz Saulo Adami. Saulo has recently published some comic strips too.

Now extremely collectible, the *Planet Of The Apes* lunchbox (Aladdin, 1974-75) is becoming more and more difficult to find in acceptable condition.

The POTA Comics Market

The Marvel POTA magazine issues climbed steadily in value while the series was being published, peaking at $3.60 for #1 in 1979. Interest in the books dropped throughout the 1980s and started picking up again in 1992. The series turns 25 years old this year, and is presently one of the more sought after titles from the mid-'70s. Many collectibles dealers price the Marvel magazines at around $10 each regardless of condition (VG or better) with exceptional high grade specimens bringing as much as $25 a copy for single digit issues. Many movie/sci-fi collectors report that having the issues and filling the holes in their run is often a greater consideration than waiting for high grade copies. Many VG issues sell at higher than Guide to non-comic collectors. The #1 issue of the Marvel magazine in general is the most requested; however, it is also the most common due to the large print run and doesn't sell for multiples of *Guide* like the later, scarcer issues. By 1977 sales were almost non-existent thus the last issue, #29, is very scarce. If I had any #29s in stock in high grade I would price them at around 5x *Overstreet*. Issues #19-26, and 28 are are also scarce. I've found issue #27 to be more common because of two different warehouse finds in Canada. At this time the market is not very strong for the British issues unless priced cheaply. On average, copies of the UK series sell (in FN) for about $10 each. Higher grade copies are almost never found because of the tabloid-like format. Most of the 1990's POTA comics are fairly common and early issues don't sell well although this is not true for the latter issues from 1992-1993. The Forbidden Zone was the last mini-series and is the scarcest. Also the last few issues of the ongoing series #22-24 are uncommon and can sell for

1987 The influence of POTA is shown in the new movies *Spaceballs* and *Time Of The Apes*

1990 Adventure Comics starts a huge line of POTA comic books

1991 *Ape Chronicles* fanzine begins (for the International POTA Fan Club)

1994 Oliver Stone (*Platoon, Doors*) announces plans to create a new POTA film

1998 Director Michael Bay (Armaggedon, The Rock) replaces James Cameron as the director attached to the prospective remake. William Broyles (Apollo 13) is presently writing a screenplay.

1999 *CBM* denotes a special issue to "The Apes"

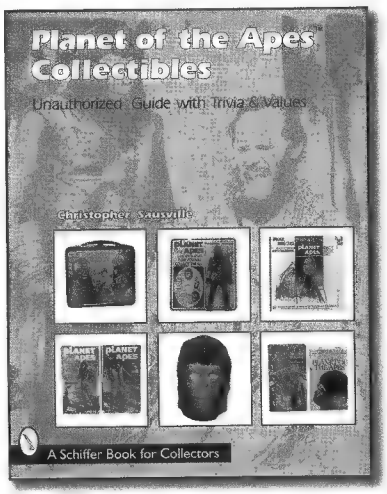
COLLECTING PLANET OF THE APES

2x *Guide*. Here are some of sales from the last nine months. The magazines rarely turn up in true NM. 1977 UK Annual VF+$50; POTA UK Magazines, all issues, VG to FN $10@; POTA #1-27 FN the set $230, #1-29 VG the set $150, #1 NM $25, #1 FN+ $7.75, #2 NM $20, #2 FN+ $10, #3 NM $20, #3 VF- $11, #4 VF- $8.25, #5 NM $20, #5 VF- $7.50, #6 NM $20, #8 VF $12, #9 VG+ $6, #10 FN+ $11, #11 FN+ $12, #13 VG $6, #14 FN+ $10.50, #18 FN+ $12, #19 VF $18, #22 VG $15, #23 FN- $9.50, #24 VF $22, #25 VG $12, #27 VF $22, #28 FN+ $15, and #29 FN $30.

Planet of the Apes Memorabilia

When the original film debuted in 1968 there was no thought of producing any merchandise... only the odd item was occasionally released at the time of a movie. After the first film became a big smash, Topps put out a 66-card bubblegum set for 5¢ a package, and Pierre Boulle's book was re-released as the movie's adaptation and titled *Planet of the Apes*, although different from the film script. After the second movie came out, Gold Key produced the *Beneath the POTA* comic book adaptation. A paperback adaptation of the movie was released with two different covers. Another paperback movie adaptation was published for the third film. In 1972 *Cinemafantastique* magazine published an all-POTA special issue with interviews with the stars and cast from the first three films. POTA had articles in various magazines and a few cover appearances on *The Monster Times* and Forrey Ackerman's *Famous Monsters Of Filmland*. The merchandising frenzy didn't happen until after the films were aired on TV. A "go ape" marathon started up across the country... theatres showing all the films in a row.

The first successful POTA line of products came from a company called Addar who produced a line of model kits based on the ape characters from the first film. In preparation for the new TV series a tidal wave of products hit stores in the summer of 1974 and continued for a year or so. The most successful items included the Mego action figures and playsets, coloring books, board games, halloween costumes, ape masks, candy boxes, trashcans, mix-n-mold models, bottle super scenes, puzzles, plush dolls, skydiving parachutist figures, wind-up horses, piggy banks, bend-n flex figures, 8mm film kits, and, of course, the comic books. The main reason POTA has achieved cult status is due to the ape-mania that came and went from 1973 to 1975. Almost all of the items came out during this short period. Kids and collectors alike were caught up in the excitement of all the products coming out. Some of the items are superb quality while others were put out cheaply and quickly to make a fast buck for the manufacturer. I haven't found sales figures for the POTA items therefore it's hard to say how big the craze really was. Obviously it had to be making money to keep putting out products, but if sales were really high than why did it die off so quickly? and why was the TV and cartoon series canceled so soon? Could it be that 20th Century Fox and the manufacturers were trying to hype a market that wasn't really there? In 1976 a new *Star Trek* toy line came out, and *Star Wars* debuted in 1977. These two series became the big sci-fi leaders and are possibly the reason why POTA got pushed into the background.


Planet of the Apes Collectibles
Unauthorized Guide with Trivia & Values
Christopher Sausville
A Schiffer Book for Collectors

1998 was the 30th anniversary of the first film, and the series got some good press along with a brand new documentary, *Behind The Planet Of The Apes*, a two hour special that aired on AMC hosted by Roddy McDowall just before he passed away in October. A new line of action figures is now on the market as well as a newly packaged set of the five films on VHS and Laser Disc with DVDs most likely on the way. Many of the original cast got together to celebrate at Starcon '98. A new wave of merchandise is coming and three books have recently been published to cover various aspects of the POTA craze. Ironically in the movies, apes overtake the humans in 1991 so in real time we have already passed the predicted timeline. Yet in many ways apes do have "dominion" over humans—as collectors open their wallets and dish out hard-earned money for POTA comics and memorabilia.

20 Most Valuable POTA Collectibles with estimated values:

1. Display box from UK for POTA rings set.....$1,500
2. Coloring book display rack.....$1,000
3. "Test card" set from Topps movie cards.....$1,000
4. Sealed box of Topps movie cards.....$1,000
5. Ape masks with hair (each).....$600
6. Individual rings from the UK set (each).....$385
7. Rapid Fire Gun with mask.....$360
8. Tommy Burst Gun with mask.....$360
9. Sealed box of Topps TV cards set.....$350
10. Candy boxes store display box.....$350
11. Ape masks (each).....$350
12. Apes sculpted masks (each).....$350
13. Comforter Blanket.....$300
14. Adventure playset.....$300
15. Playset.....$300
16. Drumset.....$300
17. Boxed set of 5 movies (Japan).....$300
18. Lunch Box with Thermos.....$260
19. Ape On Stallion Model.....$260
20. Plaster Statues (each).....$260

Terry Hoknes and CBM would like to thank Dave Ballard, Alan Maxwell, and Jeff Krueger for help and information.

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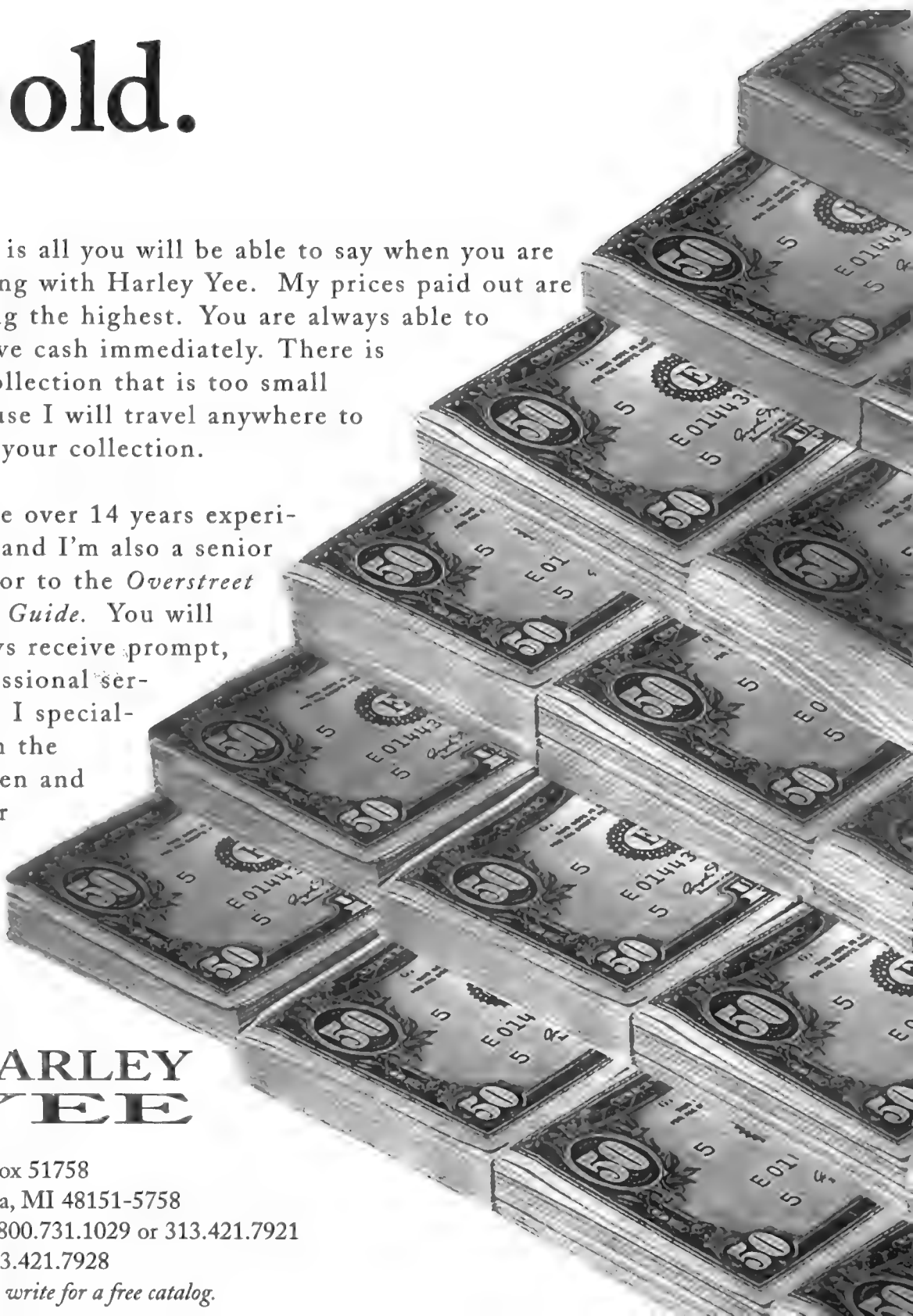

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Chuck Wachowski's Cuidera

(CONT. FROM PAGE 19)

Was that conscious?

CUIDERA: Navy, yes. I was influenced by the Germans on that, but to make them solid black, with all the gold buttons and insignia and the hats, that was rough to do. It took a lot of time. We decided, hey, we need to make them black and blue. And we did.

MURRAY: *You left Blackhawk for the Army?*

CUIDERA: The Army Air Force.

MURRAY: *Did you fly?*

CUIDERA: I wanted to. But when we went—there was Bob Powell and Dick Skosh, who used to do our lettering at the time before Sammy Rosen took over—to Floyd Bennett Field to take the exam, none of us passed it. I was pretty well disgusted. I think it was about a month after, I got one of those messages: Greetings from Uncle Sam. That's when I had the trouble with Will Eisner. Don't kid yourself. The guys that know him aren't really artists. The guys that hate his guts are guys like me.

MURRAY: *Did Eisner script any of your early Blackhawk stories?*

CUIDERA: Him? No!

MURRAY: *You wrote and drew the 1st story?*

CUIDERA: Yeah, I did the first one. I think Bob Powell gave me the material for the second or third one. Then either Will Eisner or Busy got a couple of script writers in. That's how I met Joe Millard. He came in quite early. And some of the stories… as I drew them, we made them up.

MURRAY: *Is it true that Eisner drew the first Blackhawk cover,* Miltary Comics *#1?*

CUIDERA: Yes. He did that.

MURRAY: *Otherwise, Will Eisner had nothing to do with the creation of Blackhawk?*

CUIDERA: No. He got involved after. In the beginning, I was just supposed to do Blackhawk. I wound up working on the Spirit, doing backgrounds. We got along just fine until the time came that I had to go into the Service. And I had to go in the hard way. I spent a year in the infantry, stationed at Camp Blanding, Florida.

The Golden Age Blue Beetle Mystery

After interviewing Charles Nicholas Cuidera for CBM, I happened to mention him to a long time DC Comics staffer, who stunned me by asking, "The Charles Cuidera who created Blue Beetle?" He then quoted Murphy Anderson as having been told by Cuidera that he was Charles Nicholas, the byline on Fox's Blue Beetle.

I got on the phone with Cuidera. Here is what he said.

Murray: You didn't create the Blue Beetle, did you?

Cuidera: I think I did.

Murray: There's a lot of confusion as to who created Blue Beetle. The strip was signed Charles Nicholas.

Cuidera: Charles Nicholas? That's my name. Charles Nicholas Cuidera.

Murray: Really? People have said that the Charles Nicholas on the earliest Blue Beetles was an artist named Charles Wojtkowski.

Cuidera: I don't remember that.

Murray: It was spelled "W O J T K O W S K I." He was supposed to have worked at Quality after the war, when you were art director.

Cuidera: I never knew of that name.

Murray: So you're Charles Nicholas?

Cuidera: Well, that's my real name. When you're christened, the guy who baptizes you, you take his name too. In other words, Charles Cuidera is my name. But Nicholas was the guy who baptized me in the Catholic religion. That's the way they do it.

Murray: Did you do the first Blue Beetle story?

Cuidera: Oh, gosh. Hey, you're taking us fifteen years ago.

Murray: But you're the famous Charles Nicholas.

Cuidera: I think it was signed that way, if I remember correctly.

Cuidera is correct. The Fox Blue Beetle strip was signed Charles Nicholas. But Charles Nicholas is listed as a pen name for Charles Wojtkowski in *The Who's Who in Comic Books*. Wojtkowski has claimed the Green Hornet inspired him to create the Blue Beetle. So how could there be two Charles Nicholas's?

According to comics historian Ron Goulart, the crude style of Charles Wojtkowski is evident on the earliest Blue Beetles. Yet both he and Cuidera are credited with drawing the feature. Jack Kirby also used that byline on the Blue Beetle newspaper strip.

Adding to the mystery is that both Cuidera and Nicholas are credited with drawing Blackhawk, as well as Captain Aero at Holyoke. Cuidera denies drawing that character, but since Holyoke took over Fox in 1943, it's possible these were for inventory stories.

I contacted Joe Simon, editor at Fox at that time. He dimly remembered Cuidera at Fox. But vaguely recalled Charles Nicholas.

"He worked for me and Jack for years," Simon told me. "As far as I know, that was his real name. That's who the checks were made out to."

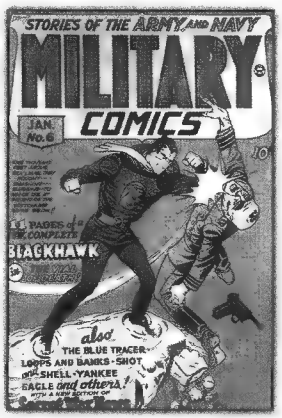
When I suggested that Nicholas's true last name was Wojtkowski, Simon recalled, "That could be. He had a kind of a Polish accent, I think."

As for who created the Blue Beetle, that was before Simon's time at Fox. Simon admitted, "I don't know why creators didn't had the byline Charles Nicholas. The only art I saw on it was Jack Kirby's work. But I didn't see any Charles Nicholas work."

So who was the real Charles Nicholas? At various times, he seems to have been Charles Nicholas Cuidera, Charles Wojtkowski (who legally changed his last name to Nicholas), Jack Kirby, Larry Antonette, Louis Cazeneuve, Al Carreno, Sam Goodell, and others. Charles Nicholas may have started out as a personal pen name, but in the ever-turbulent waters of early comics, it became a house name, the property of no one person.

MURRAY: *What was the problem?*

CUIDERA: I didn't know this, nor did any other staff member, but Busy Arnold made a deal with Will Eisner to get all the artwork together, for the printer. Eisner was running the show. We got along just fine. Up until the time the Army said, "Hey, we want you." I had to go into the service. On the last day, I had a big argument. He came in with Eiger. They were partners.



MURRAY: *Yeah. Will Eisner and Jerry Eiger. They were packagers.*

CUIDERA: Yeah. They wanted me to sign the rights to Blackhawk over to him. I said, "No way. We'll straighten it out when I come back out of the service." Well, I put in better than four years, and when I came out it was a different ball game. There was no Will Eisner. It was just Busy Arnold.

MURRAY: *When did you come home?*

CUIDERA: About 1946. I had a little baby girl, and I was worried about making a living in the art field. Naturally, I went back. I found out where Busy Arnold was. He hired me right on the spot, gave me more money than most of the guys were getting. He said, "Come on, Chuck, we'll get you back on "Blackhawk"." I said, "Yeah. I never got a dime for this, you know." But I had a brand-new baby, so I started working for Busy Arnold. And we got to be real good friends. I did most of the covers, outside of Reed Crandall, who was better than me. He was a better penciler than I was, not a better inker. He could pencil two pages to my one. And that's where we stayed. I think I did "Blackhawk" up until 1967.

MURRAY: *When did Crandall start doing Blackhawk?*

CUIDERA: We were real good buddies. When I went into the service, that's how they got him. But he also went in, six months eight months after I went in, into the Air Force too. There was always the argument: who could ink better, him or I? The staff members seemed to think I was a better technician than he was.

MURRAY: *Well, it "is" your inking that defined the Blackhawk "look," even to this day.*

CUIDERA: Right. After all, I created the characters.

MURRAY: *When you did Eisner's Spirit, did you work on the syndicated strip or* The Spirit *comic book?*

CUIDERA: Both. Primarily, he left a lot of background for me to fill in or whatnot. But I think I did one story where I did the figures too. It was about a boat or a ship. I got it somewhere.

MURRAY: *You also worked on a number of other Quality characters, like Captain Triumph, Uncle Sam and The Ray as an inker. Did you prefer inking to penciling?*

CUIDERA: Well, I could make more money by inking. But I did pencil the covers. I was the art director. The Ray was created by Lou Fine.

MURRAY: *Now, you also worked for Holyoke, on Captain Aero.*

CUIDERA: No. The deal with Busy Arnold was that he would take good care of me, but I couldn't work for any other publisher.

MURRAY: *I guess that's some misinformation knocking around out there. So you only worked for three publishers—Fox, Quality and DC.*

CUIDERA: Yeah. Right.

MURRAY: *It sounds like you truly enjoyed working at Quality.*

CUIDERA: They were very enjoyable years, with Busy Arnold. He took pretty good care of me. I didn't get to do Blackhawk right away. I did Captain Triumph. I did that for almost a year.

MURRAY: *Penciling or inking?*

CUIDERA: Both. As I remember correctly, Reed Crandall did several covers. I liked that thing, but it wasn't selling. It was right after I did quite a few of them, the boss said, "I need you on Blackhawk."

MURRAY: *So you were Quality's art director for the post-war period?*

CUIDERA: We were on 44th Street then. Busy was great. He said, "Chuck, I want you to run the show for me. You're the art director." But it was meaningless because whatever he wanted to do, he "did." (*Laughs*)

MURRAY: *Who was the editor?*

CUIDERA: Well, it was Busy himself. But in name only he had a couple of editors, Al Grennet, plus his son, Dick Arnold.

MURRAY: *Who came up with the Blackhawk airplanes?*

CUIDERA: I designed them. As you know, I was in the Air Force as a captain. Like a lot of guys, when I first went in I wanted to be a pilot. When I went in, they said they had enough pilots. I became an Air Force officer, but not a pilot. After I got out, naturally the *Air Force* magazine used to come to me. That used to supply me with a lot of information on airplanes.

MURRAY: *Tell me about first plane the Blackhawks flew. The F5F Skyrocket. Did you invent it?*

CUIDERA: They were Grumman, I think. A double-boom, two-motor job. But it was a real plane. But as the years went by, I thought maybe a needle-nose job like the F-15—

MURRAY: *After the war, they upgraded to Douglas D558 jets and at DC, Lockheed XF-90s.*

CUIDERA: Yeah. Lockheeds. You're right.

MURRAY: *Who came up with the Blackhawk's battle cry?*

CUIDERA: Hawkah? I did. We were supposed to sing it. (STARTS SINGING) "Hawkah—We're the Blackhawks—" You know. I just can't think of the song I imitated. It was the same song, only the words are different. It was a popular song.

MURRAY: *It's been reported that Dick French, Tex Blaisdell's brother-in-law, wrote some of the Blackhawk lyrics.*

CUIDERA: That's a lot of hooey. I never had any use for Tex Blaisdell. We used to call him the ass-wiper of Will Eisner. He was a cleanup boy. He couldn't draw—at that time, anyway.

MURRAY: *Did Alex Kotzky work on Blackhawk when you did?*

CUIDERA: Kotzky never did any Blackhawks, but he did work for us. Alex Kotzky used to erase

Chuck Blackhawk Cuidera

my pages and white out after the war when I got back. He never liked me, for some reason. I don't know why. I never hurt the guy. Him and Joe Kubert, they were both cleanup boys. As a matter of fact, I think Joe was still in high school, in his senior year. He kind of idolized me, but I said, "I'm not that damn good." He said, "If I could swing a brush the way you do—" I said, "Come on, Joe, it takes a little time. You'll be there."

MURRAY: *He did get there. You worked with some pretty amazing talents during that period.*

CUIDERA: I was with Busy Arnold from the beginning, right to the end. I knew just about everybody who came in. I remember a very good friend of mine, Bill Ward. He also did a couple of Blackhawks for me. He did one Torchy that I think I inked. It was banned in Boston, believe it or not. He graduated from Pratt, too.

MURRAY: *Who were the other artists you remember?*

CUIDERA: Al Bryant, when I was there, I gave him, or at least made him do, Doll Man. And he worked hard. Later on, he had a breakdown. Nicest guy you'd ever want to meet. And I thought a fairly good artist, too. But Al Bryant worked "too" hard. I haven't seen him for a long, long time.

MURRAY: *And Jack Cole.*

CUIDERA: Jack Cole was a good watercolorist. He created Plastic Man. I was the only one I guess when he came in, and we chatted. I get the shivers every time I think how he went across the street with Busy Arnold. And the next day, early in the morning, Busy Arnold called to say he committed suicide.

MURRAY: *What kind of a guy was Cole?*

CUIDERA: A nice guy. But he didn't associate with the others. We liked to talk about watercolors. I think—I may stand corrected—up in Massachusetts where he came from, he had a little school where he was teaching watercolors. I guess you knew that he also did stuff for *Esquire*. The figures were all done in watercolor. He was a damn good artist.

MURRAY: *Did you work with Gil Fox?*

CUIDERA: Fox was a good guy and a good artist, too. When I was the art director, the thing that Gil didn't like—not because of me—was Busy Arnold. For some reason Busy would not let him ink his own stuff. It would wind up on my drawing table all the time. But we were real good friends, Gil and I. The funny thing: while I was the art director there, he never came in to Busy Arnold's to pick up any comic book work. I imagine he probably went to Fawcett and a few of the other comic publishers.

MURRAY: *Who would you say was the best of the Quality artists?*

CUIDERA: Reed Crandall.

MURRAY: *Not Lou Fine?*

CUIDERA: Well, Lou Fine left us. He was an honest-to-goodness illustrator. And he'd had enough of comics. He got a job in the advertising field. He showed me some of his stuff. Fantastic. As good as anybody. The guy could "draw." I might even add that while I was in the army, his drawings influenced just about everybody. Including Mr. Eisner.

MURRAY: *After the war, who came up with the wild concepts like the war wheels and flying tanks?*

CUIDERA: There were several writers, like Joe Millard and William Woolfolk, and then a very good friend of mine who did a lot of work for Batman, Bill Finger. He had a lot of problems with DC. He came to Quality. I kinda felt sorry for him because the IRS was on him and they wanted me to dock him, you know? But he was a good writer. Incidentally, the word was that he was really responsible for doing the Batman.

MURRAY: *That's the word I hear, too.*

CUIDERA: You heard it too? But he came up with some good ideas, as I recall. I don't know whether it was the war wheel or not. I'm not sure.

MURRAY: *When Busy Arnold went out of business in 1956, he sold Blackhawk to DC. Tell me about that transition.*

CUIDERA: You see, when DC took over—I don't know why I say this—but it wasn't selling like it used to. *Military*, as well as *Blackhawk* too, went from monthly to bi-monthly. Busy told me he was thinking about closing the shop. The only guys he had was me and a fellow by the name of Al Grennet, who didn't know anything about artwork. I did all the layouts and stuff, and let him color. He couldn't color worth a damn. We got along just fine. And Busy Arnold's son, Dick Arnold. Then one day Busy told me that he had sold all the stuff that he had to DC, who now owns Blackhawk.

MURRAY: *Were you part of the package?*

CUIDERA: Yeah. He thought he could make a deal with them, provided I go along with it. Which I did. And he sold some of his best comics to DC, and got out. I was real downhearted about that. But the thing was when I went over to DC, I didn't go in every day. I did most of my work at home. I didn't get along with some of the editors. There were about four or five editors and every time I came in, it was a different story. They're telling *me* what to do!

MURRAY: *Who were your pencilers during the DC era of* Blackhawk*?*

CUIDERA: I broke in a fellow by the name of Dick Dillin… he improved quite a bit. He never inked anything. He said he was a great admirer of Reed Crandall and me. He liked the way Reed handled a pencil.

MURRAY: *Dillin, I understand, started at Quality.*

CUIDERA: It was the boss who came to me and said he had a young fellow who likes to draw comics. "Maybe you could kinda break him in," he said. Well, in the beginning, I didn't care for his penciling. (*Laughs*) Anatomically, I corrected some of them. Some, I couldn't. He improved tremendously as the years went by.

MURRAY: *Were there any others?*

CUIDERA: No.

MURRAY: *So for the decade or so you worked on the DC* Blackhawk*, it was Dick Dillin pencils and your inks?*

CUIDERA: Yeah.

MURRAY: *Did Dillin also come over to DC as part of the Blackhawk license transfer?*

CUIDERA: Yes, he did. Right up 'til the time he died. I was getting ready to retire anyway. Dick was a very nice guy, and a hard worker. I guess he learned a few things from me, I don't know. He also tried to imitate Reed Crandall. He was his inspiration as far as penciling was concerned.

MURRAY: *Who were the Blackhawk writers?*

CUIDERA: The guy that I liked was Joe Millard. We got along just fine. And William Woolfolk. And some of those stories I wrote

myself. Being the scuba diver, I was the expert on that. Oh, I did Chop-Chop too.

MURRAY: *That's right. He had his own strip for a while. What inspired you to create a comic-relief character for such a serious strip?*

CUIDERA: He came later. China, you remember, was in World War II.

MURRAY: *I understand that the name Chop-Chop has a special significance.*

CUIDERA: They used to call me Chop-Chop in school. (*Laughs*) We used to play football, but not tackle, at Pratt. I was out there representing all the artists. We played the engineers, the architects. We were pretty good, I might say. But we didn't win the championship. The engineers beat us.

MURRAY: *Who were the Blackhawk editors at DC?*

CUIDERA: One, his brother was a cartoonist.

MURRAY: *Murray Boltinoff?*

CUIDERA: Yeah. I know one time he wanted me to change the uniforms in Blackhawk. They were blue, and he made them "red." That's one guy I didn't get along with. Then there was Jack Schiff. And another I can't recall.

MURRAY: *George Kashdan?*

CUIDERA: Yeah. I liked him. He was decent. There were three or four of them, and I didn't get the same guys every time I went in. But Murray was a problem with me. He wanted me to change the uniforms. No way! I was on vacation, and Dick didn't want to do it, but—instead of making all the uniforms blue, with the hawk in the center, they reversed it and made everything red.

MURRAY: *Who actually redesigned the classic uniforms?*

CUIDERA: There was no redesign. Just the coloring was changed. When I created Blackhawk, I used the German uniform, which I thought was excellent. The pants and the boots and stuff like that. Of course, the upper part I designed myself, with the buttons and whatnot. And everybody seemed to like that.

MURRAY: *Were you still on Blackhawk when DC decided to make them into superheroes?*

CUIDERA: What superheroes?

MURRAY: *They turned the Blackhawks into these weird superheroes wearing crazy outfits. Were you still there?*

CUIDERA: Oh, yeah. I had nothing to do with that, though.

MURRAY: *Did you ink that stuff?*

CUIDERA: Yeah.

MURRAY: *That must have upset you.*

CUIDERA: You better believe it! (*Laughs*) I think I would have quit, only I had two children graduating college and one still in college. My wife was getting disturbed and she went out and got a job at Bell Telephone. I wanted to leave DC. After all, in the beginning, I never meant to be a comic book artist. I wanted to be a good illustrator, and paint covers, like Tom Lovell and Harold von Schmidt. But when I graduated, we were coming out of a depression. This was the only salvation for guys like me. Went to Pratt, graduated, wanted to paint the world, and found out you couldn't make a buck.

MURRAY: *Did you stay with* Blackhawk *until DC cancelled it?*

CUIDERA: Well, it wasn't selling. The last Blackhawk I did was either '67, or '68. I did the last story that I know of. I didn't think they had anybody else at that time to do it. At least, that's when I decided I'd had enough.

MURRAY: *What did you do after that?*

CUIDERA: I took the exam to become a senior planner in New Jersey. I got lucky, and I passed it the first shot. A very good friend of mine had said, "Chuck, they can use you at the county. You can draw." I took my portfolio there and the guy who was in charge of the planning department, he wouldn't let me out of the door until I'd conceded that I would take the job. I worked there about 15 years as a planning director, and five years as a senior planner. I'm glad I did that because I have a nice pension from the county! (*Laughs*)

MURRAY: *Did you ever see the Blackhawk serial in 1952?*

CUIDERA: Yeah, I did. It wasn't so great. I think it was Columbia. As a matter of fact, I went with Busy Arnold. They didn't have my name. They took Reed Crandall's name. Boy, I blew my stack. I said, "I didn't mind my sharing, but—" Mr. Arnold said, "Chuck, I'll have them fix that." I said, "Where the hell do they get the idea that he created Blackhawk?"

MURRAY: *Did you get any money for the Blackhawk serial?*

CUIDERA: No, I didn't get a "dime."

MURRAY: *Why didn't you ever sue for ownership of the Blackhawks?*

CUIDERA: Busy Arnold really took care of me, as far as bonuses every year. He liked me very much. I thought he was a pretty fair guy. But I wish I had known at the time that Eisner had a deal with him.

MURRAY: *Who came up with Lady Blackhawk at DC?*

CUIDERA: That I don't remember. I wanted a woman Blackhawk, but I did not come up with that one.

MURRAY: *One of the other major characters in the post-war era was Blackhawk's major enemy, Killer Shark. Do you remember him?*

CUIDERA: Being a scuba diver and a lifeguard, sharks always intrigued me. My folks had a summer home and we had a 26 foot yacht. We used to go out for sharks. But the gimmick was not to use a regular salt-water pole, but to use a light lake pole, and have fun with it. This is what we did for sport. I caught a couple of the big sharks. I speared one, underwater. It scared the hell out of me. This thing was about six foot. Me and my buddy got back-to-back and kept the spear gun loaded but he never bothered us. He circled a couple of times, but that was it. That was my encounter with a shark. (*Laughs*)

MURRAY: *Why did you leave comics completely in the late '60s?*

CUIDERA: Number one, they started to go downhill. I wasn't making the money I should. We had two kids in college and the other one getting ready to go to college. We needed the money. I always had a desire to do things in color. Paint. The only thing I ever got was from Mr. James, who was the art director for Street & Smith before they closed shop.

MURRAY: *You did pulp covers?*

CUIDERA: I think I did a sports cover that I remember. I did a couple of covers for somebody else, but they weren't as big. I did dry brush, too.

MURRAY: *When you look back at your comics career, are you happy with it?*

CUIDERA: It was all right. I never dreamed of going into comics. But I'm glad I did! (*Laughs*)

A WRITER ON THE PLANET OF THE APES

(Continued from page 31)

so he was the one who bought my very first story. I sold some scripts to DC and I was about to do even more work for them. I went to New York and Julie Schwartz took me into his office, swept his hand at some art and asked, "What do you see? What do you like? Justice League? Flash? What do you want?"

I went back to Chicago and thought I should send some stories to Julie. I had also done a proposal for a big coffee table hard cover book, *The Encyclopedia of Horror.* The day that A. S. Barnes—now Barnes & Noble—accepted the book and sent me a contract, Roy Thomas at Marvel called saying, "Why don't you come to New York and work for Marvel?" That was in 1972.

I told Roy I'd try it out for two weeks. It was Manhattan, it was the middle of summer, and it was really awful, but I ended up getting really excited about it. I went back to Chicago, packed up everything, and moved to New York.

CBM: *What was your first assignment?*

MOENCH: I was hired as an assistant editor which was a glorified proofreader. I think I probably had the shortest tenure on record, something like two months. They gave me all this writing to do. [These pieces] were just like the Warren material. They were 7, 8, 10-page horror stories for *Dracula Lives* and *Tales of the Zombie* and so on. That was to give me enough money to make the move. They told me to voucher as many stories as I wanted. So I was just making up titles, filling out "9 pages" or "8 pages" and putting in the vouchers and they paid me, and then I had to write all of these stories later.

Ghost Rider was the first color book they offered me. I only wrote one issue of that and then they offered me *Manwolf.* That was J. Jonah Jameson's son, if you remember. Then very quickly, it seemed like almost a book a day, I got *Frankenstein, Werewolf By Night,* and *Master of Kung-Fu.* This was on top of my editorial duties.

So after seven or eight weeks of this, Roy called me in the office and said "We need more writing from you." I said, "Roy, I'm working here eight hours a day on staff, plus I'm already writing more than any of your other writers. If you want any more writing out of me, I've got to stay home."

He said, "Well, I thought you'd say that... wait until you train your replacement." That's how it happened. After that came *Planet of the Apes, Deadly Hands of Kung-Fu.*

CBM: *Don McGregor (writer of* Sabre, Nathaniel Dusk, *and one of the assistant editors on* Planet of the Apes*) has described you as an infuriatingly fast writer. He said you could get an assignment on Friday and turn it in on Monday.*

MOENCH: I could have turned it in on Saturday! I did not know that I was fast until I got to New York. I had no idea. When you write in a vacuum, all alone, you don't know if you're fast or slow. Then I get to New York and I start hearing comments like Len Wein saying "I had a great day today. I wrote six pages of dialogue."

I said, "What do you mean a great day? Were they really good pages?" He said "I mean it was six whole pages. Usually if I can do two or three I'm lucky."

I've done 28 pages of full plot and script in one day without a problem. That's when I found out I was fast.

CBM: *Before you got the assignment to write the POTA adaptation, were you a fan of the films?*

MOENCH: I enjoyed the first film a lot. I cannot say I was a big fan of the franchise. I liked the second one, but not quite as much. It was better than most sequels. I'm not even really sure I saw the third one. I know I didn't bother with the last two.

CBM: *Did you really write the last two adaptations without seeing them?*

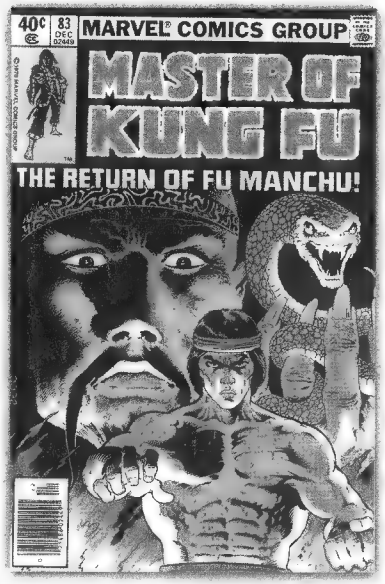
MOENCH: I wrote them from the screenplays. That's why the comic adaptations are not accurate with the finished films. I've been asked by many fans "Why did you put that in there?" about several scenes. I worked from the screenplays, so the stories were accurate but not all of the scenes made the final cuts of the films.

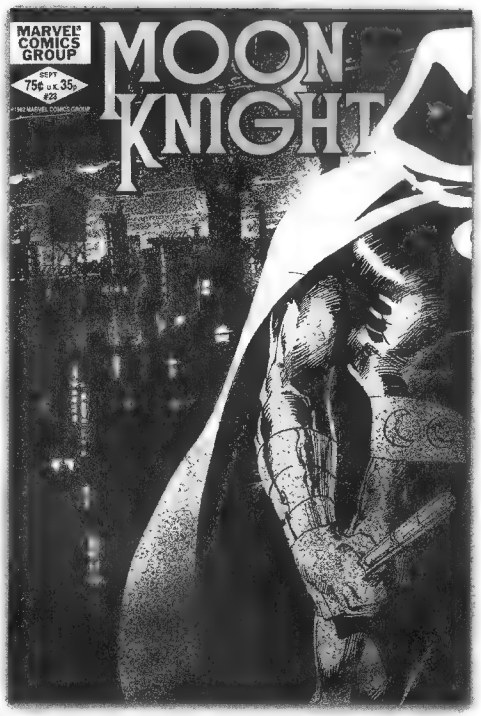
CBM: *There were two distinctly different prints of* Battle for the Planet of the Apes, *one which had many of the references to the Alpha-Omega bomb from* Beneath *in them. They were in your adaptation and it always seemed to make it a more complete circle.*

MOENCH: I was accused of taking all these liberties, but at the same time they would tell me the scenes were really good.

CBM: *When you took on the series, did you know it was going to be an on-going thing?*

MOENCH: You didn't think like that back then. I loved those days. I hate the way the business is these days. It's such an ordeal to get something going. You have to write a proposal, and then you have to write a shorter proposal because they don't have time to read something that long... then you have to wait for contracts, the lawyers are monkeying around... then you sign the thing, then the editor gets a budget... and so on.





Back then you could make a deal with Roy Thomas on second base at the Marvel softball game. You'd run to second base, Roy would be playing short stop or something, he'd say, "Hey, Doug, you want to write the *Inhumans*?" and you'd ask, "What's that?" He'd say, "Monthly, color" and you'd ask who the artist was. He'd say "George Perez" or someone else and you'd agree.

He'd say, "Okay, first one next week" and that would be that. You had no editor looking over your shoulder at that time. The writers were more responsible. Don McGregor was his own editor, I was my own editor, Steve Gerber was his own editor, Steve Englehart was his own editor. Len Wein, Marv Wolfman, Roy Thomas… we all pretty much wrote what we wanted.

CBM: *Don't you think more was actually expected of the writer under that kind of system?*

MOENCH: Yeah. Not only did the editor not tell us what to do, we didn't have to tell the editor what we were doing. Who likes to be a zombie robot? That's why all of the stuff I'm doing now is self-generated.

I still have to go through the hassle of writing a proposal or two proposals and having it read by a committee, having it approved, having contracts and all that, but at least it's all me. I come up with it and they say yes or no. When you're on a monthly book these days, [particularly] if it has to tie in with other titles and that nonsense. It used to be rare and have some weight, and it used to be a big deal. Well, it's not a big deal anymore.

CBM: *What was the approval process like for Apes?*

MOENCH: I don't really know. Everything had to be sent to Apjac [Arthur P. Jacobs was the producer behind the film series and Apjac was his production company] and I know there were some issues with the art. It was always things like, "The character can't look like Charlton Heston." In the original stories I did with Mike Ploog and Tom Sutton there were never any complaints that I know of. The only thing I ever heard was that they were really big fans of what we were doing.

CBM: *Do you still get feedback from fans?*

MOENCH: Yes. It's really funny. Because I've done so much, I don't if there are any "Doug Moench" fans, but I've got people who know me only because of *Aztec Ace* [Eclipse series from the '80s] or only because of *Godzilla,* only because of *Planet of the Apes,* only because of *Batman*… there doesn't seem be anyone who knows all of my work. There is a group that seems to know me from both *Master of Kung-fu* and *Moonknight.* I just did an interview with a guy who only knew me from my horror work, the Warren stuff, Skywald, and the Marvel black and whites.

CBM: *Mike Ploog's artwork on "Terror on the Planet of the Apes" really set an artistic standard for the magazine. What do you think made his work so good?*

MOENCH: I don't know. I could theorize a number of things. Innate talent, and he is old enough to have looked at the masters rather than just comic book guys. And he was trained to a certain extent by Will Eisner.

I don't think there's a better teacher on Earth. If I wanted to be trained by someone, I'd say it would have been Will Eisner or Harvey Kurtzman, and Eisner would probably get the nod.

Not only does Mike know the comic book medium as well as Kurtzman, I think he could draw a little bit better. I don't know what makes Mike so good. Some guys just are.

CBM: *Were the original stories more of a collaboration than the adaptations of the movies appeared to be, at least in some cases?*

MOENCH: Yes, definitely. I wrote the adaptations full script where I generally prefer to work plot-pencils script.

CBM: *Ploog is someone who drifted—some might say "sprinted"—away from comics pretty quickly. What do you think would have to happen to get someone like that back into the medium?*

MOENCH: We're in contact right now. We're talking about doing something. This is probably the fifth time Mike has said "I'm sick of Hollywood. I'm getting out. Let's work together again." This time it sounds like it might happen. He had some especially bad experiences on the last couple of movies he worked on. He actually sold his house in California and bought a house in England. I think he's in the process of moving in right now. I think he's just tired of the Hollywood nonsense… I think he wants to tell stories again, and I hope we're going to do that soon.

A WRITER ON THE PLANET OF THE APES

CBM: *In addition to Mike Ploog, Tom Sutton worked with you on several different stories, including the "Future History Chronicles" with that great City-Ship he illustrated. What was Tom like to work with?*

MOENCH: Fantastic! He worked on these gigantic pages whereas most other artists were working on pages 1½ up [the art pages were half again bigger than they were reproduced], he was working twice up. My desk wasn't big enough to hold his pages. You could get more copy on the pages and get some denser stories out of it. He could get more detail in. He really got into *Planet of the Apes*. I happen to think that it sort of jazzed him up for a sort of renaissance in his career. It seemed like a quantum leap at the time.

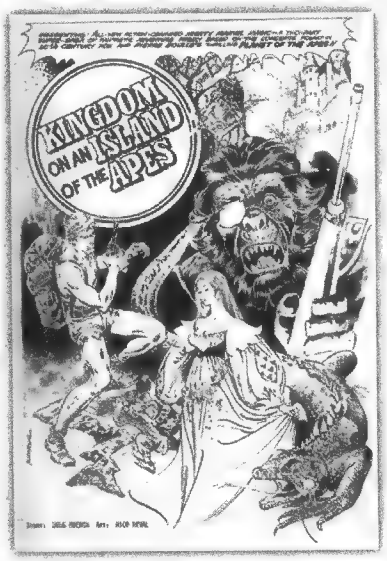
CBM: *Was there a distinct difference in how you wrote a script if you knew specifically who would be illustrating it?*

MOENCH: Going back to your question about collaboration, I could say things to Ploog in the beginning and then later on I wouldn't have to say them. I could ask him what he liked to draw and then tailor a story to his preferences, and when a guy is drawing what he likes to draw he does a better job, right? That's where the riverboat stuff [in "Terror on the Planet of the Apes"] like Gunpowder Julius and Steely Dan came from.

I forget now what it was he liked, but he had mentioned that he liked Davy Crocket or frontier-type things, and that gave me the idea for those characters. Steely Dan is my version of Mike Ploog. He's the huge guy just roaring with laughter, an extrovert. I just magnified that. He just loved it and did a great job. He got into one so much that we actually just printed the story from his pencils.

CBM: *How did you come up with the characters in "Terror?"*

MOENCH: You know what I'm most proud of in there? They used all Latin names in the movies, but they didn't think of Brutus. I used that for my evil gorilla leader. I thought that was great. Anyway, Roy called me in and told me that Marvel had acquired the rights to *Planet of the Apes*. He said Gerry Conway was going to do it, but he had to drop out. He had written one page of notes. Roy gave it to me. It was a very loose thing, but it had the names Jason and Alexander, one human, one ape, they're friends and they get into trouble. From that, I made them young. I wanted to make it an allegory on racism, which was implicit in the movies. And it seemed to me that kids are not as hung up on race.



CBM: *You did a one-shot with Ed Hannigan called "Evolution's Nightmare."*

MOENCH: Ed became a buddy of mine. I think he was in the Bullpen doing corrections and stuff. He wanted to do his own story. Back then it was easy. You just had to convince Roy or someone to give you a chance… I can't remember if Mike Ploog was running late or they just decided to give him some extra time, but Ed wanted to prove he could do a story. That's pretty much how "Evolution's Nightmare" came about.

CBM: *There was another one of the originals called "Kingdom on an Island of the Apes" illustrated by Rico Rival.*

MOENCH: It gets back to what I was saying before. I used to get these calls like, "Can you do a one-part Apes story?" and I'd ask when they needed it, and that would be that. I think England went *Planet of the Apes* crazy. Marvel UK started doing a weekly and they actually got ahead of us at one point.

CBM: *At least at one point it was called* Planet of the Apes *and* Dracula Lives!

MOENCH: We couldn't keep up with their weekly schedule. They asked me to do this original stuff for England that we later put in the American version. That later happened with *Master of Kung-Fu* and *Deadly Hands of Kung-fu* as well. It didn't last very long… and I couldn't keep up with their weekly schedule. I don't remember all the stories.

CBM: *So you don't remember all of the stories you've written?*

MOENCH: No. Every once in a while someone will put a comic in front of me for an autograph and I'll say, "I'll sign a blank piece of paper, but I won't sign something I didn't write," and the person will say, "Yes, you did write this," and I won't believe them. I'll open it up and there will be my name on the credits. I'll read it and then maybe it will come back to me.

CBM: *Do you ever get ones that you read and you still don't remember?*

MOENCH: Yes. [laughter] I'll actually go back and find a carbon copy of the story and finally have to admit I wrote it. [more laughter]

CBM: *Do you have a favorite moment from the series?*

MOENCH: I was at an ACBA meeting [the Academy of Comic Book Arts]. Neal Adams was President, I was Vice-President. Ploog was there. I always loved getting together with that guy. He's a rodeo rider, a bronco buster… he's just this big guy. He's shorter than I am, but he seems bigger. He had this huge beard. He showed up for a meeting, which he generally didn't do, with the riverboat pages. After the meeting, looking at those pages, that was probably the best time. That was really a quantum leap for Ploog. He was capable of it all along, but he really got into that story. That was really great.

CBM: *Hey Doug, thanks for talking with* CBM *readers.*

MOENCH: You bet… it was fun.

Want to read more about Planet of the Apes? Check out CBM *on-line at www.gemstone.com.*

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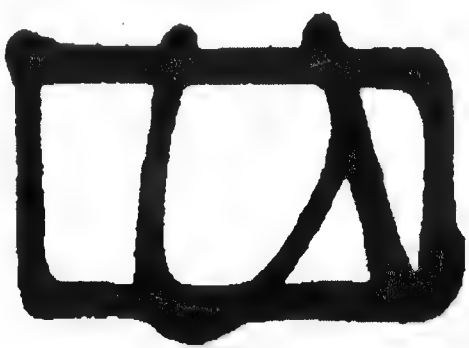

THE MICHAEL NAIMAN REPORT

Skillful Squiggles and Scratches

Collecting original art is a natural place to expand for many comic book aficionados. Before venturing into this area of collecting however, one needs to "learn the ropes" and educate oneself. There are several factors which will affect the prices paid for comic art that you should be familiar with before parting with your hard earned money. Let's take a look at a few of these.

Vintage: From what era do you wish to collect? Strip art from the turn of the century, Golden Age, Silver Age, or Bronze Age or current comic book art? Generally, the earliest or first year of a strip or comic will have more of a value than later pieces. Sequences from the artists or features peak period might also influence the price. Published art work is almost always more valuable than unpublished work.

Size: The size of art can significantly affect the value. In comic art, most of the pre-1968 material is double the size of the finished product... often referred to as "twice-up." Post-1968 size was reduced to 1.5X the finished product.

Rarity: Certain examples of newspaper strip art are very rare and thus, the price is difficult to set. Some newspaper comic art was handcolored either for presentation or as a guide to the printing department and are highly valued. Golden Age art is nearly impossible to locate except for a few rare covers and Timely pages are thought to be non-existent.

Significance: In comic art, the artist, first issues, first appearances and origins of major characters are all looked upon as highly desirable and valuable items.

Condition: Paste over corrections, white out, glue stains, tears, water stains and general states of poor conservation will all significantly impact the value of original art.

When asked 'What should the new art collector should look for?' collector **Henry Baba** of San Francisco offered these comments, "When I acquire original art, I first try and meet my favorite artist at a comic convention. Many artists will bring their most recent and past works of original art pages and offer them for sale. Also, many Golden Age artists (while not presently drawing current comics) will do commission pieces. If you cannot afford to buy a comic page you might ask for a sketch at a modest price (some artists will even do sketches for free). Secondly, I try to personally meet or call original art dealers. You can give them a want list but, you need to stay in contact . I have picked up art several times because I happened to call an art dealer and asked if he had recently purchased any new material. Some artists will sell their art exclusively to a particular art dealer so you may have to go through a dealer to pick up a particular art project you're interested in."

Long established art dealer **Tom Horvitz** of TRH Galleries observes "The beginning art buyer (or any collector entering a field new to them) should research the field. He/she should spend money on catalogues, books, surf dealer and collector websites, and anything else they can think of before buying any art. Initially learning about the field is far more important than spending money. A little research goes a long way."

"Most dealers will share their knowledge with a prospective client. Going to conventions is another good way to get educated. Meeting artists and buying from them will always save money. Forgeries are very scarce, and rarely turn up, but they do exist."

East Coast collector **Jon Mankuta**, a specialist in '70's cover art stated "As a beginner, try and observe the following guidelines: (1) Buy what you like... be it artist, or character, make sure you are buying it for YOU... ORIGINAL ART IS NOT AN INVESTMENT!!!! Art doesn't appeal to a "broad" market... it appeals to a specific market. (2) Buy from a reputable dealer and shop around and see who's got the best prices. Remember, unless you want a VERY specific page, *(Cont. on page 60)*

MARKET REPORTS

JOSHUA NATHANSON • COMICLINK
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Demand is very strong for high grade Silver Age Adventure Comics,and has been heating up for Golden Age Wonder Woman and Sensation Comics.Silver Age Marvel titles that are heating up are Journey Into Mystery Comics, X-Men, Fantastic Four and Daredevil issues—especially in NM or better. Anything in NM+ sells like lightning and truly NM Silver and Golden Age sell extremely fast at well above Guide prices. Demand a so seems to be rising for pre-hero Marvels (Atlas), especially in the higher grades. High grade Sci-Fi and Horror continue to be excellent sellers.

Timely: Blonde Phantom #16 VG- $155; Captain America Comics #36 FR $150.

Golden Age DC: Action #57 VG/FN $170, #165 VG/FN$110; All American #30 FN+ $460, #47 FN $315; Batman #1 appears FN but extensive restoration and back cover recreated (fake back cover) $4400; #11 FVF $2200; Comic Cavalcade #11 VF $385, #20 VG+ $200; Sensation #22 VG $125, #32 VG/FN $115, #35 VG/FN $100, #43 VG+ $100, #53 VG/FN $70,#61 FN- $90, #72 FN $110, #75 FN/VF $125,#102 VG- $80; Star Spangled #67 VG/FN $170, #80 VG $105, #89 VGF $150, #110 VGF $70; Wonder Woman #8 VG $140, #10 VG/FN $275, #13 FN- $235, #18 FN $245, #30 VG/FN $170,#39 VG $95, #40 VG+ $110; World's Finest #9 VG $295.

Silver Age DC: Adventure Comics #237 VF/NM $225, #246 VF/NM $225; Showcase #6 FN/VF $2350, Strange Adventures #16 FN+ $185, #24 FN $100, #35 FN/VF $135, #43 FN/VF $140. *(Continued on page 60)*

◆◆ CBM MarketWatch ◆◆

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
15 FN $1,800 ....1.43X
20 VG+ ....$950 ....1.70X

Air Fighters
2 FN $160 77%

Atom
12 FN $22 1.05X

Avengers
5 VF $190 1.30X

Batman
24 GD $110 ....94%
46 FN $250 .1.25X
54 VG+ $150 .1.19X

Black Cat Mystery
45 VF $120 1.92X

Blue Ribbon
14 VF ... $480 1.15X
19 FN+ $220 1.36X
21 VF $415 Guide

Blue Beetle
12 GD .. $48 120%
45 VG $120 78%
49 VG $120 78%

Brave and Bold
29 FN $175 34%
30 FN $148 33%

Brick Bradford
6 FN $60 Guide

Bulletman
16 GD $45 90%

Captain America
13 FN $1,500 ....1.72X
18 FN+ $900 ....1.25X
25 VG $600 169%
47 VF $850 1.11X

Dagar
15 VG $90 1.13X

Daredevil
11 VG $150 93%

Detective
45 FN .. $741 91%
72 VG . $200 1.16X
87 VF $450 Guide

Durango Kid
20 FN $20 76%
28 FN $20 76%

Eagle, The
1 FN $130 75%

Eighty Page Giant
1 GD $25 72%

Famous Crimes
20 VG+ .....$25 ....1.04X

Fantastic Four
1 GD $751 Guide
1 GD $695 93%
1 GD- $535 71%
6 GD $76 61%
6 GD+ $104 83%
48 NM $600 70%
121 NM .. $22 1.83X
123 NM .. $15 125%

Felix the Cat (Toby)
58 FN+ $25 50%

Fight
17 VF $185 . 79%
19 GD- $38 97%

Giant Size X-Men
1 NM- $400 91%

Green Hornet (GA)
1 GD $350 92%

Green Lantern
1 VG $425 1.09X

Hangman Comics
5 VG $130 79%

House of Secrets
92 VF $255 83%

Jimmy Olsen
59 FN .....$19 ....1.97X

JLA
1 GD $100 50%

JoJo
8 VG $80 Guide
12 FN $110 95%

Jungle Thrills
16 VF $160 68%

Ken Shannon
3 VG $50 1.33X

Lash LaRue
12 VG+ $30 80%

Lois Lane
70 GD+ $18 84%

Lone Ranger
144 VG $20 1.48X

Four Color
136 VG+ $80 2.1X

Looney Tunes
61 VG+ $17 1.4X

Military Comics
12 VG .....$140 .....74%

Millie the Model Annual
1 VF $135 .1.53X

My Date
1 VG $60 .1.14X

Night Nurse
4 FN $15 1.11X

Night Rider
1 NM $12 1.33X

OAAW
269 NM- $35 3.5X

Our Flag
3 VG+ $130 88%

Parole Breakers
3 VG $50 1.05X

Pep
29 VF+ $520 ... 1.2X

Peter Pan Treasure Chest
1 GD $100 .....1.2X

Phantom Lady
15 VF ..... $1,250 . ..1.09X
18 FN .....$400 .....93%

Phantom Stranger (Aurora)
1 FN .....$800 . ..1.71X
2 FN- .....$400 ....1.33X
3 VG+ $350 .2X
6 VG $150 1.16X

Planet
45 VF $250 65%
47 VF $250 83%
53 VF $200 66%
57 GD $95 50%

Police
11 VG- $240 67%
13 VG $130 60%

Rip Hunter
6 FN $40 1.33X

Secret Origins
3 NM $12 1.20X
5 NM $21 ....2.1X

Seven Seas
6 VG+ .....$300 . ..2.94X

Shanna the She Devil
1 VF .....10.25 ...Guide

Sheena
7 VF+ $275 1.38X

ShockSuspenstories
15 VG+ $29 81%

Showcase
8 AppVG $700 43%
12 GD .....$114 Guide
13 FN $660 77%
14 FN+ . $1,001 Guide
14 GD $185 55%
16 VG $105 70%
16 VG $109 73%
34 GD $86 93%
34 GD $51 55%
43 GD $75 2.08X
74 VF+ $20 44%
76 VF $15 46%

Silver Streak
10 FN+ $480 1.2X

Sinister House of Secret Love
1 VF $60 3.53X

Smash
9 FN $90 77%
28 FN $115 77%

Smash
30 FN+ $175 1.16X

Spy Smasher
7 VG+ $185 1.14X

Startling
49 VF- $1,000 66%

Strange Fantasy
9 VG+ .....$55 .. 89%

Sub-Mariner (GA)
25 FN+ $350 1.16X

Sugar & Spike
65 VG+ $15 1.5X
98 VF $26 89%

Sunny
12 VG $75 80%

Superman
145 FN+ $35 77%
2 FN+ $5,250 1.84X
3 VG $1,200 95%
4 VG+ $1,100 1.17X
6 VG+ $550 1.15X
6 VG $416 87%
7 GD $360 1.5X
8 VG+ $500 1.07X
9 GD $250 1.07X
14 VF $2,700 1.73X
14 GD $435 1.81X
23 NM $1,960 2.09X
32 VF . .....$800 .....1.6X
200 NM- $60 ....1.33X
239 NM .....$44 ....1.26X

Suspense Comics
9 GD $125 94%

Tales of Suspense
52 VF .....$135 ....1.53X

Tim Holt
6 VG $20 35%
19 VG $20 36%

Venus
1 FN+ $400 1.26X
11 VG $105 81%

Weird Horrors
5 VG+ $35 88%

Wonder Comics
11 FN $140 ...Guide
20 VG $110 ....1.06X

Wonder Woman
197 NM .....$36.50 ....2.43X

Wonderworld
7 FR $75 1.2X

World's Finest
211 NM $18 1.80X

Wow
2 GD+ $1,200 6.35X

Yankee
3 FN+ $90 68%

Zip
28 VG- $170 90%

Zoot
7 FN .....$200 .....89%
8 FN .....$175 ....1.07X
9 VF .....$200 .....65%
10 FN .....$140 .....86%

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

there's a page of original art for EVERY COMIC PRODUCED WITHIN RECENT YEARS... (pre-1965 gets a little tougher...). So don't think "It's the only time I'll be able to find a page of original Superman art... I'll never see one again..." You will, you just have to LOOK! (3) Beware of photocopies... Original art sometimes is photocopied onto pages to be printed (called "stats"), and these are sometimes mistaken for original art that's hand drawn... an easy mistake. If "stats" are OK for you, they should be only about $10@ or so. (4) Know the types of art. The main type of "original art" is black & white pages, pen and ink and there is also "color guides" (or "original color art"). Color guides are photocopies of a black and white page that the colorist uses as a color guide. While the line art on these is not original, the colors are. These can be fun and inexpensive to collect. Another choice might be preliminary drawings, or "pre-lims." These are pre-production drawings (usually in pencil...) of a page or cover... before the artist actually does the final copy. Usually the artist does this just to see how an idea will look on paper."

For many new collectors, I'd recommend that their first purchase of art just might be from one of the most prolific creators of all time... Jack "King" Kirby. You can't go wrong with Kirby.

Veteran collector **Joe Mannarino** of All Star Auctions notes, "Jack Kirby was one of the chief architects of the genre. He lead comic book illustrators through its Golden Age, engineered its Silver Age and redefined its Modern Age. Almost every artist who has worked in the medium was influence by him. His art has been enjoyed for over half a century."

"If you're looking to purchase Kirby art, you've got some important choices to make. Do you want twice-up work (13" x 18") or do you want the 10" x 15" post-1968 size? Do you want early '60's Marvel work or the Fourth World art from DC? What about pre-1959 art from Harvey, Crestwood, and Headline with such titles as Champ, Speed, All New, Boys' Ranch, Stuntman, & Boy Explorers?"

"With Kirby art, an important final factor with Kirby is who did the inking over Kirby's pencils. Inkers can play a huge roll in the valuation of original art... especially Kirby's. The major contributing inkers in general order of popularity are Joe Sinnott, Chic Stone, Steve Ditko, Wally Wood, Frank Giacoia, Dick Ayers, Mike Royer, Joe Simon, and Vince Colletta. Every collector will have their own favorites, and their own taste."

As a new collector will soon come to understand, many of the transactions in the original art world (like the comic book biz) come about as cash, trade, and cash/trade transactions. Because of this, a novice will want to build up their inventory so that when the time comes, they'll have enough to trade towards a bigger acquisition. It is not uncommon to find a piece of original art being traded back and forth between the same parties on different transactions.

Whether you collect the R.F. Outcault's Yellow Kid or Alex Ross' Superman, there's something out there that is affordable and special to everyone.

Here are a few items which have recently sold on ebay. These prices do not necessarily reflect the true market for each item, but rather the spot price someone is willing to pay at auction.

Action #417 pg. 11 (Swan-pencils/Anderson-inks) $180, #600 pg. 8 splash (Byrne-pncls/Perez-inks) $480 ; Archie strip from 4/29/55 (Bob Montana) $131; Archie 5 page story (1989) Stan Goldberg $43; Batman #209 (unpublished cover) Irv Novick $1026; Brave and Bold #79 pg. 23 (Neal Adams) $480; Bringing Up Father (1928 daily) G. McManus $174; Doc Savage #1 cover art (1975) Buscema/Romita $1425; Iron Man #2 pg. 2 (1968) $103, #8 pg. 7 (1968) $44; Mighty Mouse #169 pg. 4 (artist unk.) $106, #106 pg. 2 (artist unk.) $40; Powerman #60 pg. 10 (M.Severin-pencils/Leialoha-inks) $41; Star Wars Weekly #114 (1982-British) Infantino $610; Two Fisted Tales #23 pg. 1 (Wally Wood-pencils and inks) $813 X-Men #14 pg. 16 (Kirby-layout/Roth-pencil/Colletta-inks) $407, #278 cover (Paul Smith) $1009.

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 58

Marvel: Avengers #13 NM $235, #2 NM $900; Conan #1 FN/VF $90; Fantastic Four #48 NM $1000; Hulk #102 NM+ $250; Journey Into Mystery #86 VF/NM $385; Spider-Man #16 VF+ $280; Tales of Suspense #2 VG $100, #32 VG $65; Tales to Astonish #10 VG- $75, #18 VG $65, #27 VG $450; X-Men #5 VFNM $420.

Other: Captain Marvel #8 FN/VF $320, #13 VG- $100; Dell Giant Vacation Parade #1 FN/VF $335;Four Color Comics #178 GD $75, #238 FVF $225; Pep Comics #11 GD+ $100; Slave Girl #1 VF/NM (Bethlehem) $1050; Space Detective #3 FN/VF (Bethlehem) $230; Tarzan #6 FN $85; Weird Fantasy #23 VF+ $157.50.

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The recent prime sellers have been comics associated with artists, be it interior or cover art. Neal Adams, Berni Wrightson, Alex Toth, and Mike Kaluta have joined Kirby and Ditko as the "kings" of the Modern Age. CBM #40 had an Adams index which has led people to seeking out all 400+ of his mainstream endeavors!

Kirby monster and Fantastic Four reprint books continue to be sizzling as fans bypass the originals for the lesser priced copies. Interest remains strong in genre titles: war,western,television tie-ins, and certain Hanna-Barbera and Dennis the Menace books. We sell selected Harveys and Richie Rich as well as an abundance of Archie titles, except for Jughead. Demand is strong as long as the price point is under $10.

The activity continues in mid-'70's Marvel titles, both low and high grade. The original readers are in their mid-late '30s and looking for books they didn't keep... the standard plight of the return collector!

DC back issues across the collecting spectrum continue to sell, especially secondary titles like Green Lantern, Flash, Hawkman, and the Atom. We're looking for a windfall of books in the coming years as the hobby continues to age and more of the '40's and early '50's books are sold off for pleasant retirements for the original holders.

Sugar and Spike is strong along with humor

ous "girl titles" such as A Date with Debbie, Binky's Buddies, and Archie's Girlfriends Betty and Veronica. We can't keep Wonder Woman comics in stock in any grade... they fly outta here! Look for a renewed interest in some of the World's Finest run.

Recent Sales: Batman #12 GD/VG $400, #13 VG/FN $650, #31 VG/FN $250, #36 VG/FN $250, #41 FN/VF $320, #53 VG $150, #59 GD/VG $100, #63 PR $20, #85, VG/FN $125, #200 FN $65; Detective #20 FN/VF $2300, #49, FR/GD $130, #53 VG/FN $350, #71 NM $1000, #89 VG- $120, #116 VG/FN $200, #185 VG+ $100, #209 VG- $70, #267 GD/VG $40; Green Lantern #2 GD+ $100, #40 FN $175; Plastic Man #18 VF/NM $250, #28 VG $60, #62 GD/VG $30; Sensation #61 GD/VG $35; World's Finest #30 VG $150.

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The market seems to be continuing its slow and steady increase. Where it isn't increasing it is at least firm. The price revisions of the last Guide were pretty good. There has certainly been more interest in Marvels than I've seen in a long time. DCs have been consistent good sellers for me. There is strong demand for the lower priced Golden Age books as well.

Sales: Bobby Benson B-Bar-B #1 FN $125; Boy #25 GD\VG $30; Cosmo Cat #3 VG+ $40; Detective #93 VG $110; Fightin' Marines #2 VG $70; Golden Arrow #6 FN $86; Hyper Mystery #2 coverless $30; Metal Men #1 GD $34; Ozark Ike #12 NM/MT $60,#15 NM/MT $60; Showcase #3 FN $172; Strange Adventures #16 FN+ $210; Supermen's Time Capsule FN $125; World's Finest #14 FN- $295.

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Comic sales remain steady for me. I note that all genres are selling well out of my cata.og including Dells, Disneys and Golden Age. Those who say the comic book market is dying simply have their material priced too high.

Platinum Age: Little Nemo 1906 VG+ $1800, LOA C&L 1929 VG $65 1932 VG+ $50,

Golden Age: Action #134 coverless $25; Adventure #151 VG+ Frazetta $125; All American #80 VG+ $200; Batman #42 VG+ $200, #50 VG+ $200 #50 p-f $20; Black Terror #24, 25 FR $20 ea; Blonde Phantom #15 FN $180; Capt Marvel #89 VG $36, #122 VG+ $40; Capt Marvel Jr #79, #80 FN+ $50; Comic Cavalcade #18 3/4 cover $60; Don Winslow #37 VG- $10; Flash #77 VG $190; Funny Pages v#3 #9 VG+ $200; Gift #4 VF- $300; Green Lama #3 VF $300; Marvel Fam. #14 FN+ $75 ,#63 VG+ $30; Marvel Mys. #87 VF- $425; Master #87 VG $25 #110 NM $75; Modern #80 VG+ Crandall $75, #92 cvrless $15; National #9 VG $225; Robin Hood 4C #413 FN- $15; Sensation #65 VG $65; Star Spang. #53 FR $20; Sungirl #1 FN- $350; Superman #17 GD $150, #20 FN $450; Whiz #106 VG $35,#117 VF $80; Wonder #9 FN+ $100.

Silver Age: Action #334 FN- $15; Batman Annual #2 VG $50; Detective #395, #397 NM Adams $25; Fly #7 VG $15, #11 VG $13; His Name Is Savage #1 VF+ Gil Kane $25; MIS #75 VG $45; Phantom #18 Wood VF+ $25, #19, #20 VF+ $20 ea; Showcase #34 FR/GD $50; Unearthly Spectac. #2, #3 VG+ $10 ea; Unk. Worlds #3 VG $20; World's Finest #76 VG $60; #81 VG $50; Young Heroes #36 NM $40.

Bronze Age: Cerebus #7, #8, #9 VF+ $25 ea; Chamber of Chills #1 NM $40; Conan #3 VG+ $30; Eternals #1 NM $10 #4, #5 NM $5 ea; Kamandi #1 NM $30, #2 NM $20, #4 NM $10; X-Men #59 NM $50.

Crime: Big Town #17 VG+ $30; Crime & Punishment #59 VG+ SOTI $50; Crime Can't Win #8 VG+ $22, #11 VG $18; Crime Cases 24 (#1) VG- $15; Crime Incorporated #12 (#1) VG+ $25; Justice #51 VG $13; Police #127 VG scarce last issue $35; Real Clue v#4 #5 VG+ $15; Mr DA #20 VG $25, #36 VG+ $25.

Good Girl: All Top #8 VG+ $450, #14 FN $260; Black Cat #6 FN- S&K $90; Cavegirl #12 VG $50; Comedy # FN+ Kurtzman $100; Dagar #14 (#1) VG+ $175, #21 VG SOTI $80; Exciting #58 NM+ $400; Jo-Jo #9, #10 VG+ $100; Joker #31 VG+ $40; Jumbo #91 FN $53, #94, #99 FN+ $75 ea, #114 VG $25; Lorna #13 VG $15; Phantom Lady #15 1#6 VG+ $500 ea; Rulah #17 (#1) FN+ $300, #20 FN $130, #21 VG $150; Seven Seas #3 NM w/slight bc blemish $500; Showgirls #1 VG+ scarce De Carlo $75; Startling #44 VF- $250, #46 FN+ w/corner clip $100; Wonder #17 VF+ $350.

Horror: Baffling Mysteries #12 VF- $75; Black Magic #23 FN- S&K $50; Chamber of Chills #0 VG+ $40, #17, #19 VG+ $45 ea; Hand of Fate #19 GD/VG$20; Haunt of Fear #6 VG+ $100; Ken Shannon #3 VG+ Crandall horror $50; Punch #13 VG+ 1945 $150; Strange SuspenStories #18 VG+ Ditko $100; Strange Tales #86 VG $35; Web of Mystery #7 VG $35; Weird Thrillers #5 VG+ $50; Witches Tales #10 FN+ $50.

Romance: Dear Lonely Hearts #8 VG $10; Girl's Romance #107, #131 VG+ $5 ea; Heart Throbs #1 VG $100, #103, #105, #107 VG+ $5 ea; Patsy Walker #7 VF $50, #47 VF $20; Pictorial Conf. #3 VG+ Baker, Kubert $40; Realistic Romances #16 VG+ Kintsler marijuana story $25; Secret Hearts #93 VG+ $5; Sweet Hearts #73, #74 VG+ $3 ea; Tessie #11 VG $45, #12 FN+ $75, 1#3 VG+ $50, #14 VG $30, #17 VG+ $25 (Wolverton's Powerhouse Pepper drives the Tessie market); Yng Brides #22 VG- $4.

Teen Humor: Date with Millie #7 VG 1957 DeCarlo $20; Jughead #2 FN- $125; Candy #5 VG+ $15 #7 VG $13; Cindy #28 VG $17; Georgie #16 VG+ $12; Hedy of Hllywd #40 VG+ $15; Mitzi #1 VG+ $40; Rusty #15 VG $20, #18 VG $14; Teen #24 VG $20, #25 VG+ $18.

War: Aces High #3 FN+ $35, #5 VG+ $25; Ken Shannon #5 VG+ $40 Our Army At War #98, #99 VG+ $30, #99 FN+ $50, #100 VG+ $35; Our Fighting Forces #158, #159, #160 NM Kirby $20 ea; Wings #91 FN- $35.

Science Fiction: Amazing Adv. #6 VG+ $75; Fantastic Wrlds #7 VG+ $25; Space Action #1 FN- $165, #2 VG $100; Space Adv. #12 VG+ $100; Str. Adv. #61 FN- $40; World of Fantasy #19 VG+ $40.

Western: Apache Kid 32 VG+ $30; Best of the West A-1 #42 (#1) FN- $100; Bill Boyd #31 VF+ $300; Durango Kid #12, #13 FN+ $50 ea; Frontier Western #6 VG+ $27; Gene Autry #19 PR $3, #75 VG $10; Hopalong Cassidy #21 FN $36, #39, #46 GD $8 ea; Jimmy Wakley #4 VG $80; Johnny Mack Brown #7 VF $33; Lone Ranger #1 FN+ $200, #5 FN $57, #7 VF+ $125 #8 VG+ $55; Masked Ranger #9 VG+ $35; Monte Hale #31 GD $10, #45 VG $15; Prize Western #114 VG+ $20, #117 VG+ $15; Rawhide Kid #19 VG $18, #23 VG $28; Roy Rogers #2 VG+ $75, #3 VG+ $60; Tim Holt #6 VG $20, #22 VG+ $25; Tomahawk #73 FN+ $20; Tom Mix #23 FN+ $45; Tonto #29, #33 FN- $7 ea;Two Gun Kid #10 NM $150; Two Gun Western #8 FN- $25; Western Adv. #1 VG $35; Western Comics #1 VG $125, #18 VG $30, #23 VF- $60; Western Gunfighters #23 FN $20; Western Kid #2 VG $17; Western Outlaws #18 FN Fox $60; Western Thrillers #3, #4 FN+ $50 ea; Western True Crime #3 FN+ $65.

MARKET REPORTS

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The first two months of the year have historically proven to be sluggish, but this year seemed to show improvement over previous years. We experienced fairly brisk sales activity in both stores, and the internet continued to perform at a very satisfying level. Ebay is showing no signs of slowing down, though we have seen a growing disinterest on mediocre material, regardless of category. We seem to enjoy our best ebay returns on unique items (original art, fanzines, limited edition books, etc), but we also experienced very spirited bidding activity on coverless Golden Age comics (see reported sales).

February marked the end of a fairly long dry spell in the acquisitions department, with two large original owner Silver Age collections coming into our hands. One comprised of 3500 mid to high grade Marvels, the other 2000+ DC superhero and war titles in similar condition. While the DC war titles performed rather poorly, probably more a symptom of mid grade than content, the latter Silver Age Marvels (Doctor Strange #169, Captain America #100, Submariner #1, Marvel Superheroes #12, etc.) sold surprisingly well! Nearly 1/3 of the collection was gone within a week! Perhaps these books have finally found their way back to being perceived as bargains! We also saw higher than anticipated interest in 20¢ Marvels like Hulk, Captain America, and Sub-Mariner.

Golden Age: Action Comics #73 VG $128; #98 VG $103 All American #85 VG $72 Batman #13 GD+ $340; #18 VG $600;#20 FR/GD $125 Detective #127 VG $78; Suspense Detective #1 FN $75 World's Finest #10 VG $177; COVERLESS Golden Age: All Flash #21 $21; All Star #50 $37; Daredevil Battles Hitler #1 $201; Flash #30 $20 , #44 $23 ,#90 $27; Green Lantern #23 $20; Superman #62 $27.

Silver Age: Amazing Adventures #11 NM $70; Amazing Spider-Man #6 VF- $475; Captain America #100 VF $200 ; Doctor Strange #169 VF $90; Iron Man and Submariner #1 VF $90, Submariner #1 VF $90.

Oddball Stuff: Lot of 5 Weird Tales pulps @ good condition $120; Voice of Comicdom #16, 1970 Corben fanzine, VF+ $65; Frazetta Women of the Ages portfolio, signed, VF $100.

Original art: Galactus splash by John Buscema $325 ;Ghosts #102 cover by Buckler $225; Kid Colt cover by Gil Kane $400; Master #118 spalsh by Schaffenberger $270.

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I have been selling mostly Silver Age and Bronze Age books, with a smattering of Golden Age on the internet and in the Mid-Atlantic region. Sales continue to be strong on the internet for the "off" titles. Romance books that simply do not move at all at local shows fly on the internet. The internet, and particularly ebay, has become the first place customers look for the "odd" book.

Golden Age: Action #93 G/VG (amateur restoration) $40; Batman #34 VG $130, #43 VG $120, #68 VG $75, #92 VG $62.75; Jimmy Olsen #9 GD/VG $40; Uncle Scrooge #7 GD $15.

Silver Age: Action #236 FN $20; Sugar and Spike #1 Fair $500 (trade); Superboy #56 FN $47, #68 FN $76; Superman #124 FN/FN+ $40; Jimmy Olsen #32 $22; Teen Titans #8 NM $26.

Bronze Age: Amazing Spider-Man #144 NM $14; Batman #260 FN/FN+ $15.50; Dark Shadows #4 VF $16; Flash #213 VF+ $11.50; Lois Lane #122 NM $22; Superboy #205 FN $16.50; X-Men #100 NM $41

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We have seen a reasonable amount of back issue sales. We have had more tourist sales as of late and have been able to move more product via mail order. We still have to discount too many books, however, the situation is not as dire as a couple of years ago. The recent lowering of the prices on superhero Silver Age has helped. Hopefully the prices will continue to level off and make more books affordable to the majority of collectors.

A real problem I have with the Overstreet Price Guide is with funny animal and humor books. With very few exceptions I can never realistically receive close to full Guide price. The prices on Dell, Archie, Harvey, Gold Key and others are not consistently attainable and need serious adjustment. I have had a lifetime love affair with the wonderful Dell TV and movie photo cover books. I have all of them and enjoy those issues as much as any Timely or DC that I own. However the fact remains that no matter how enthusiatic and supportive I am of these books they just won't sell at close to Guide price here, especially the overblown high grade photo covers.

Every year more restored comics pop up on the market, so how about a price listing for restored books from 1935-1963. Not all titles would be listed but a start in the right direction would include DC, Fawcett and Timely Golden Age followed by Silver Age keys. and this would help.

Silver Age: We had many Silver Age sales this month. Both high and low grade books moved. DC was our top seller. 1970's Marvels had a good month also.

Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #7 VF $475; Atom #1 FN $200; Batman 155 VF $250; Davy Crockett FC #631 VF $35; Showcase #8 fair $450; The Monkees #1 NM $45.

Golden Age: Demand continues for Golden Age books however, they seldom come our way.

Sales: Archie #7 GD $50; Batman #6 VG $550; Detective 111 VF $275; Four Color #62 VG $150;Superman #4 GD $250; Submariner #23 VG $175.

Disneyana, Toys and Artwork: Very active this month. Demand continues for Silver Age art , however this vintage material does not pop in too often.

Sales: Nana animation drawing $75, Batman Aurora model kit in box $250; Group of four Disney BLB $75; Matchbox Y-4 in box very fine $25; Hanna Barbera Dino cel 1980s $50.

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Interest in the pre-1930 comics and collectibles has never been stronger! I think this is due to the ever-increasing amount of information being published, and the opportunity to see many of these books and collectibles for

the first time on ebay.

The new OPG will have expanded historical information written by Bob Beerbohm and me as introductions to both sections of the guide. These two articles will provide a brief but thorough introduction to the history of comics. Second, Buster Brown's Autobiography is a very rare 1907 book that I have only seen (and purchased) once in the last 15 years—it was available at auction this week on ebay! Even if you don't want to buy them, enter the names of some of the great old comic characters like the Yellow Kid, Buster Brown, Little Nemo, etc., in the search function on ebay and you will be treated to pictures of collectibes you have never seen before. I am constantly seeing new collectibles and I have been specializing in this kind of material for nearly 20 years.

When buying vintage comic character collectibles, unlike regular comic books, you often have to choose between getting an item in poor to good condition, or not getting it at all! Many of these pieces are extremely rare and often fewer than 10 of a given item are known to exist. Accordingly, you really can't wait to get a mint copy if you really want the piece you are considering. Further, when you get the chance to add a mint book, for example an early oblong reprint comic book, to your collection, you can expect to pay dearly. All of these titles are extremely rare, if they even exist, in mint condition.

Recent Sales: Buster Brown's Experiences with Pond's Extract advertising booklet FR $70; Yellow Kid calendar postcard, FN $75; Buster Brown's Tige, His Story, in FN $204; Little Nemo sheet music, VF $150.

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I continue to respectfully disagree with Bob Overstreet saying that a Fair or a Poor can be incomplete as long as it doesn't affect the story. As far as I see it (and confirmed by many dealers and collectors I spoke with) "... all books regardless of grade should be complete unless otherwise stated." Otherwise you are giving sellers license to advertise incomplete books WITHOUT TELLING THE BUYER! This makes the collector of Fairs and Poors very reluctant to purchase these books via a mail order service for fear that the books are incom-

THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Low grade books dominate on-line sales

Collectibles are hot. Will they leave comics behind? More than a few think so, as comics do all they can to catch up. Third party grading, slabbing, and a new grading scale are just a few new thoughts. Will they be accepted by the average collector? Not likely, but perhaps any new business is good business for all of us. (At least that is the sales pitch.)

Golden Age: Mile High sightings have been very active and they have been trading hands often. Lower grade books appear to dominate on-line sales and continue to set record prices. Amazingly, low grade Timely books are in higher demand than higher grade books.

Golden Age Sales: Cyclone Comics #3 FN/VF $275; Daring Comics #10 VG/FN $190; Dynamic Comics #1 VG $375; Funny Stuff #1 GD $110, Gang Busters #17 VG/VG+ $120; Junior Miss #24 FN $48; Leading Comics #1 GD $420; Master Comics #29 GD $105; More Fun #69 FN $425, #73 FR $1,400; Punch Comics #20 GD+ $135; Science Comics #2 GD $200; Sheena #3 FN $180; Silly Tunes #1 VF $195; Sparkler #14 FN $100, #17 GD $145, #22 FN/VF $650; Sub-Mariner #1 FR $1,250, #8 FN/FN- $475; Super Mystery #1 FN $580; The Gumps #1 FN $40; Wonder Woman #5 GD $195, #6 FR $105.

Atom Age: Sellers used to report that they often felt awkward asking such high multiples for Atom Age books in lower grade. Not much of that any longer! All they have to do now is place the book on ebay and let the market take care of itself. Results have been astounding, but nothing new to those who have been trying to find these books for the past three years.

Atom Age Sales: Classic Ill. #47 1st FN $70; Cookie #1 FN/VF $98; Crime and Justice #17 NM $85; Crime and Punishment #31 NM $85; Dagar, Desert Hawk #19 VF/VF- $230; Diary Secrets #12 VF $145; Durango Kid #1 FN/FN- $235; Fight #44 FN+ $75; Fighting Yank #28 FN/VF $210; Hand of Fate #21 VG/FN $95; Haunted Thrills #3 FN $100; Junior Comics #11 FN $205; Love Romances #6 VF $120; Marvel Tales #134 VF $110; Oscar #3 VF/NM $125; Panic #1 GD/VG $45; Pawnee Bill #1 VF $90; Real Clue Crime Stories V#2/#5 FN $100; Rin TinTin #1 FN $82; Romantic Love #20 VF $95; Secret Mysteries #18 VF $135; Teen Age Romances #14 GD $78; Tex Morgan #1 FN/VF $150; Women Outlaws #6 VF $295.

Silver Age: Remember when Golden Age was hot and a few high grade Silver Age collectors bucked the trend and started buying up books? These guys accumulated an amazing stock that is now in great demand. If you want NM or better, you'll be paying the price these guys dictate.

Silver Age Sales: Daredevil #8VF+ $120; Detective #333 NM- $55; Double Life of Private Armstrong #2 FN $105; Forbidden Worlds #73 VF $160; Green Lantern #2 FN/VF $280; House of Mystery #1 GD $148; Jimmy Olsen #100 NM- $45; JLA #46 VF/NM $110; Greatest Adv. #1 GD/GD+ $145, #55 VF/NM $98; Nick Fury, Agent of Shield #1 NM $85,#3 NM $44; Our Army at War #203 VF/NM $55; Rawhide Kid #2 FN $150; Showcase #18 VG$110, #20 FN $240; Str. Tales #125 NM/NM- $65; Str. Worlds #1 VF/NM $680; Superman #158 VF $45; TTA #83 NM $65; Jetsons #1 FN $87.

Bronze Age: True NM Bronze Age books continue to be tough to find. Try your local store for quantity in NM or better earlier than 1973 and you'll be shocked at how little there is. Collectors are trying to scoop up these books regardless of title from 1970 to the end of 1972.

Bronze Age Sales: Superman Fam. #164 NM $28; Blitzkrieg #1 NM $22; Shazam #1 VF/NM $18, #18 VF $16; Crypt of Shad. #1 VF/NM $18; House of Mystery #203 VF $20, #225 VF/NM $44, GI War Tales #3 NM $9; Homer the Happy Ghost #4 NM- $42; Son of Satan #1 NM $27; Jonah Hex #1 NM- $38; Green Lantern #90 NM $14; Gunhawks #1 NM $14; Crypt of Shadows #1 FN $1.50; Ghosts #1 VF $52; Marvel Double Feature #1 FN $2; Marvel Super-Heroes #32 NM $10, Metal Men #41 VF/NM $30; Ms. Marve. #18 NM- $8; Roman Holidays #1 VF/NM $32; Kamandi #1 NM $32; DC 100pg SS #9 VF $72; DC Spec #3 VF/NM $28; Flash #215 NM $35; Room 222 #1 FN $16; Secr. of Haunted House #6 NM $8; Savage Tales #2 NM $18.

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 63

plete. Please Bob, change this erroneous definition! Collectors and dealers, if you agree with me, let Mr. Overstreet know! He's very receptive and open to feedback! Now that I've gotten that off my chest…

Golden Age: Timelys continue to be top-dog especially Capt. America (which in lower grade, sell for about 25% over Guide).

DCs: Always popular. Towards the end of the year I purchased complete runs of All-Flash & Green Lantern, mostly in Fair-Poor to VG shape, plus a near complete run of Flash from about #62-104. They were 90% gone within two months. A restored Flash #92 sold for $700. Among the slowest sellers were All-Flash #1-4 in Fair/Fair+. I sold the group for $1,000. I find that with strict grading, low grade '40s material continues to move well.

Non-DCs and Timelys: If it's Golden Age superhero, regardless of condition, it sells! Quality Comics puolications are difficult to locate. Fawcetts sell well! Fiction Houses are generally slower but still solid! Dells/early 40's move briskly, while Dells/late '40s are slow.

Silver Age—DC: 10¢ covers: . sell 90% of what I buy, regardless of title and condition. Anybody who does otherwise is probably not grading strict enough.

Where are all the Wonder Woman comics? I can sell all I can get, but where are they?

12¢ covers: Superman titles sell best followed closely by Batman & Detective. JLA, Flash and Green Lantern are also solid sellers! Other titles sell OK except for House of Secrets, with Dial H for Hero! Aquaman is still slow.

In general, all '60's DCs are solid sellers. Particualrly those so-called 'low-value' '60's DCs. I easily get $4 each for them (even if they are only $1.65 or so in the Guide as in the case of the late DC Legion Adventures)

Marvels: early '60s: For me these are solid sellers especially Fantastic Four! I recently sold a FF #4 in a strict FR- for $110.

'65-'71: Still selling OK. I guess Bob O's reductions on these were a good thing, it made these babies very affordable with me selling these for $4-5 in the GD+ to GD/VG range. Higher grades continue to sell briskly for 60-90% of Guide. The best sellers among these are Avengers, FF, Spiderman and Xmen.

'50s-'60s Miscellaneous: Archies sell well, especially '50's Archies. '50's Horror are "run-away best sellers" when I get them. Early Creepy and Eeries are moderate sellers. '50s Westerns are selling very well, especially Gene Autry followed closely by Roy Rogers.

Dell & Gold Keys: TV sells best, followed by movie comics and Magnus Robot Fighter. The slower sellers are the 'Funny' Dells of this period, (WDC&S, Looney Tunes, etc.)—unless they are discounted signifigantly. Of these, Uncle Scrooge is selling much better than the other 'Funny' titles, except (surprisingly) Little Lulu!

Bronze Age/1970s—DCs: Great sellers! I recently got in a fairly healthy stock of these, and boy, are my customers happy! What other dealers want the most it seems are the '70's Horror & Mystery DCs, followed by the Superhero DCs. The Kirby 4th World DCs seem particularly vigorous …even Demon and Kamandi. DC War books are still solid as well.100-Page DCs sell like crazy and all 52-68 page DCs sell big time.

Marvels: Fastest sellers are the '70s "Giant-Size" series of Avengers, FF, X-Men, etc. The more obscure Marvel titles (such as ManThing, Ms Marvel, etc) sell slower unless you're willing to package them out for 75¢ each. Hulk #181 continues to be strongly desired. I could probably sell 100 copies of this book for near-Guide if I had them. X-Men #94 & Giant-Size #1 are also strong .

Misc. '70s: Portfolios and comic-related '70's items in general are strong. Archies, Charltons,& Gold Keys are all decent sellers.

Magazines: Marvel mags are moderate sellers. Warrens sell well, especially Vampirellas, if discounted. The Skywald titles (Witches Tales, etc.) are asked for by a smaller but enthusiastic clientele.

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Golden Age books are selling well as usual. Books, particularly in the $100-$500 price range are fast sellers. Timely, DC, Fiction House, and MLJs are the most wanted.

Books from the '50s are always a good draw, as well as Silver Age books, with some price adjustment. We've recently sold a collection of Detective Comics from the early '50s into the late '70s. As I reported last month, the Internet is a new factor is in this hobby. From pricing to availability, the Internet has changed it all. For a buyer, this is a great new opportunity to get hard to find books without the expense of flying to a major convention, and for the seller this opens up a whole new relatively untapped market.

For example, movie inspired books, like adaptations, are not a very big deal to the comic collector, but a movie collector, who would never consider a comic, this is a great find. Recently on ebay, we have offered the Marvel Comics Raiders of the Lost Ark, three issue series sold as a set. Individually, these issues sell for about $1. The set sold for $25 the first time listed. Original art is also a hot seller on auction sites.

We've had original Kirby, Wrightson, Adams pieces for sale, and were not disappointed in how they did. In addition to low guide books and original art, we are beginning to offer comic premium items for sale online. Business has picked up so dramatically in the past six months on our online sales, that I doubt the need to maintain a retail location.

With slumping sales in the new book market, I've seen this trend with many of my colleagues; the move from retail location service to exclusive mail order service. I fear many more will follow suit, and that will be the end of the direct market. I wouldn't be surprised if ten years from now, if I find myself picking up the latest comic at my local grocer's or newsstand.

Recent Sales: Adventure Comics #88 FN+ $400; Captain Marvel #26 FN/VF+ $200; Captain Marvel #29 VF+ $300; Captain Marvel Jr. #11 VG $100; Captain Midnight #10 FN/VF $280; Captain Midnight #9 FN+ $225; Green Lantern #8 VG/FN $400; Little Dot #1 FR/GD $400; Sgt. Fury #1 VG $140; Sgt. Fury #13 VF/NM $280.

Superman #25 VF/VF+ $750; Wonder Woman #6 VG/FN $270; World's Finest #12 FN/VF $550; World's Finest #11 FN/VF $550.

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Timely, on the whole, always do well when priced in the $300 to $500 range. Captain America outsells titles in this area. Horror books, in the last year, have been getting more attention. Marvel Silver Age has slowed

down lately except for Journey into Mystery.

Recent Sales: Amazing Spiderman #1 PR $320; Avengers #4 VG/FN $325; Captain America #5 VG/FN Overstreet Copy $1475; Famous Funnies #35 VF $400; Flash #1 FR/GD $3600; Green Lantern #1 VG- $300, #2 VG+115; Hulk #182 VF/NM $50; Lois Lane #1 VG+ $415; Mister Mystery #17 VF $200; Superman #2 FR $650 (signed by Siegel.)

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The comic world is on fire! I just had two record shows, one n Boston and one in Chicago! I was constantly busy and had a great time at both shows. Couple this with an increase in mail order (definitely due to on-line sales) and it has been a busy 1999.

While the Oakland Collection is still doing well for us (we recently sold a decent grouping of Westerns and Romance), I am starting to see increased interest in low and mid-grade Bronze Age Marvels and DC's. The one part of the market that I have seen slowing for us is the horror titles. This could be due to generally higher prices.

Golden Age: All Winners #1 VF/VF+ Kansas City Copy $9,000; Batman #39 NM Spokane Copy $1,200; Captain America #26 FR/GD $175; #48 VG $420; Daring Mystery #1 FN Kansas City Copy $5000; Flash Comics #3 GD- $380; Human Torch #18 NM for $3,800; Marvel Mystery Comics #13 VG $750; Mystic Comics #1 VF+ Kansas City Copy $9,000; Sensation #34 FN- $380; Space Western #42 NM Spokane Copy $605; Submariner #1 VF/NM Kansas City Copy $22,000; Wonder Woman #1 VG/FN $4000, #4 VG $125.

Bronze & Silver Age Adventure #247 VF $3,000, #260 VF+ $950, #295 NM $115; Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love #3 NM Oakland Copy $75; Fantastic Four #55 VF+ $75; Green Lantern #75 NM Oakland Copy $150; Incredible Hulk #1 VF $3,750; Iron Man & Submariner #1 NM Oakland Copy $170; Showcase #75 NM+ Oakland Copy $155; Sugar & Spike #73 NM+ Oakland Copy $125; Swing with Scooter #20 NM+ Oakland Copy $54; Weird Mystery Tales #1 NM $40; X-Men #6 NM $400; Young Love #78 NM+ Oakland Copy $50.

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Now seems a good time to look back on the old catalogue to see what sold, what could have sold many times over, and what's still lying around.

Bronze Age: The oversize format (52 pages, 68 pages, 100 pages, Treasury and Digest size) continue to be very much in demand. The easier to find, and higher priced 100 page issues of Batman & Detective are the only slow movers, the rest all sell well at about Guide prices, with some bringing a little over Guide, and a few still bringing multiples of Guide. The first six or so issues of DC 100 page Super Spectacular are still substantially undervalued in Guide. The 52 page Romance books (titles like Young Love, Young Romance and Heart Throbs) sell great at $20-$25 NM, the 100 page issues bring $35-$65 in NM (which is a lot more than their value 18 months ago, but a lot less than the current $140 a pop in Guide).The current JLA series is very popular, and interest in it has spilled over into the original series. I have almost nothing left between #80-#261. Mind you, when the catalogue came out, I had at least one of every issue between those #s. Now they are gone.

Odd ball books like Li'l Pals, Li'l Kid, & Homer the Happy Ghost sell well at 25-50% over Guide. Charlton romance, horror & mystery, and many TV titles have truly come of age. Putting together runs of Charlton titles is proving really difficult for the collectors brave enough to try. By 1975, a lot of comic books were being sold to collectors in comic book shops. Charlton's books, with a few notable exceptions, did not appeal to most collectors of that time. So most of their sought after books were sold at drug stores to non collectors who read 'em and trashed 'em. The few that survived did so after suffering years of indifference in the 25¢ boxes. Yes, the Charlton collector's life can be a lonely one. The only thing really holding Charltons back is their quality. One issue of Ghostly Haunts gets you a nice Ditko story, next issue it looks like your kid sister wrote and drew it. I think as this market matures, we will see Charlton issues with better art (Ditko, Jones, Sutton, Aparo) break away from the rest of the pack.

Recent Sales: DC 100 Page Super Spectaculars DC #4 FN+ $60, DC #6 FN $35, DC #7 VF $20, DC #8 FN $40, DC #9 VF $45, DC #10 NM $50; Haunted Love #2 NM $15; Ghosts #1 NM $70; Marvel Spotlight #1 NM $25, #2 NM- $125; Super DC giant S-#24 NM $20, S-#27 NM- $9; The Cat #1 NM $25.

Treasury Sales: Superman Vs. Wonder Woman VF+ $25, Superman Vs Muhammad Ali NM $35, Superman Vs Shazam FN+ $15; Marvel Treasury Edition #2VF+ (2nd Supes/Spidey team-up) $15; Freedom Fighters #2, #3, #5, #8 & #9 $4 each; David Cassidy #1 NM $50; Midnight Tales #1 FN $9, #3-8 NM $10 each; Ghost Manor #1 GD (2nd series) $4.

Silver Age: They sell steadily. Right now, I'd rather have GD and VG books over FN and VF. NM is still welcome. As I look over my sales, I realize I sell a lot of Silver Age at 20-30% off Guide. The lower prices for lower grades have brought many collectors back. I don't set a lot of records or sell a bunch of major keys, but plenty of collectors are working on their runs of the major titles and the sales of these books is sure and steady.

Recent Sales: A bunch of Sgt Fury's and Strange Tales at about 50% off guide; Amazing Spider-Man #18 VG $45, #38 GD $10, #51FN $25; Avengers #13, #14 FN $22 ea, #50 VF $10; Batman #145 GD $10; Daredevil #27 NM- $35, #30 FN+ $10; Fantastic Four #8 VG $85, #54 GD $3.25; JLA #66 NM $20; Magnus Robot Fighter #5 VG $6, #9 FN $8, #11 FN $5; Midnight Mystery #3 GD $3.50; Mighty Sampson #2 FN+ $6; Superboy #91 VG $9; Tales of Suspense #46 FN+ $40, #48FN+ $75; Tales to Astonish #36 VF+ $300; Teen Titans #6 VG $5.

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Things are still truckin' along on ebay. More and more material is popping up, which means more is passing. But the bidders have increased as well. The cat's out of the bag, and it's only a matter of time before the "ebay market" matures. So my advice to you is get on, get selling, and set those reserves low! Now is the time to move that junk that's been sitting in your bins for ages. Even though you'll only get a portion of Guide, you're gen-

erating cash flow, not to mention putting some new material out there into circulation. I give ebay another 6 months before it becomes very difficult to move average/below average material.

Ebay (and the internet in general) will be considered a very important chapter in the back issue industry, simply because it's allowed a slew of collectors access to books that have been generally unavailable to them. Golden Age books have long since dried up in the typical comic shop, so they've become "out of sight, out of mind." Collectors had to know where to look for quality material, like trade publications and big conventions. As a result, the growth of new pre-Silver Age collectors has stagnated, or even shrunk over the last few years. Easy access to this great stuff through ebay (and assorted websites) is creating a bunch of new collectors, giving a big boost to the market. It's been a while since something generated this much interest in older books.

Sales: Adventure #73 App VG/FN $1,000; Detective #117 GD+ $36; Green Lantern #1 VG+ $255; Strange Tales #101 VG/FN $120; Thor #126 FN- $21; True Crime #2/1 VG- $66; Sub-Mariner #11 App GD+ $175.

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The February auction was perhaps the most successful to date. Just over 94% of all lots sold, with good bargains for buyers as well as a few exceptional prices for sellers.

Golden Age: Human Torch #14 appVG (missing centre-fold) $135; Master Comics #25 VF+ $855; Superman #2 FN+ $2995; Torchy #1 appVG- $67; Zip Comics #36 VF- $92.

Atom Age: Amazing Adv. (Ziff Davis) #6 VF+ $250; Racket Squad In Action #12 VF+; $235; True Life Secrets #23 (Classic) FN- $37.

Silver Age: Fantastic Four #1 App GD+ $705; #6 NM- (Exceptional copy with white pages) $3153 (2.1X Guide); Hulk #2 App VG $142; #3 VF- $414; Tales To Astonish #55 NM $220 (2.3X); Amazing Spider-Man #31 NM- $251 (1.6X); Showcase #12 FN- $181 (58% Guide); #19 VG+ $117 (45% Guide); #75 NM- $87, #81 FN+ $25; Green Lantern #4 FN+ $89 (82% Guide); Hawkman #13 NM/+ $99.

Bronze Age: Ghosts #1 VF $72; Kamandi #1-5 NM/+ $91; DC 100pg Super Spec. #17 VF+ $45; Supernatural Thrillers #2 NM $24; Sojourn #1-2 FN-/FN+ $16 (11X Guide!); Wacky Races #1 VF $44.

Art & Memorabilia: Personal letter from DC Superman editor Mort Weisinger (1962) $79; Marvel Postcard letter (1963) $36; Sheet of 8 Marvel Superhero stickers (1967) $37.

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Most of these mail order sales I'm reporting this time around fell in the November-January period. It's become increasingly evident that even a city the size of San Diego seems to contain only a handful of serious back issue collectors. Reaching Gold and Silver Age customers requires nationwide marketing to support retail sales. Simultaneously, customers from other states seem more than willing to shop outside their domains looking for their book to fill the want list. Following the current market trend, we continue to receive inquiries for the key pre-Code horror/crime comics currently the rage. We receive fewer calls for Golden Age superheroes, followed by a reduction in calls for Timelys and LB Cole material. Westerns are growing in popularity with no

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one character playing dominant. Another surprise, Classics Illustrated are selling well for us. All grades and all printings.

Recent Sales: Adventure #157 VG/FN $44; Advs. of Bob Hope #6 FR $18; Black Diamond Western #58 GD $4; Blackhawk #52 FN $55, #55 VG $37; Crime Does Not Pay #46 VF $68; Desperados #5 FN $15; Frankenstein (Prize #5 VG $60; Gangbusters #14 VG/FN $75; Incredible Science Fiction #32 App. VG $55, #33 App. VG $40; Mad #20 VF $150, #21 VG $55; Modern #81 FN $81; Murderous Gangsters #1 PR/FR $9; Panic #8 FN/VF $26, #10 FN $20; Tales From The Crypt #32 FN $150, #44 VG $72; Two-Fisted Tales #24 App. VG $20, #26 App. VG $20; Walt Disney's Comics and Stories #88 VG $38, #93 VG $25, #96 GD/VG $20, #97 GD/VG $20; Western Gunfighters #22 GD/VG $25; Weird Fantasy #9 FN+ $100; Weird Science #19 App. FN $60.

Silver Age: Amazing Spider-Man #23 App. GD $25, #32 VG $30, #33 VG $30; Avengers #13 VG #22; Batlash 31 VF $10; Brave & Bold #46 VG $13, #48 VG $10; Daredevil #42 FN $4.80; Fantastic Four #49 App. FN $30; GI Combat #89 FN- $18; Hot Rods & Racing Cars #8 FN $23.50; Incredible Hulk #3 FR $72; #107 FN+ $22.50; Sgt. Fury #2 GD/VG $32; Tales to Astonish #36 GD $39; Teen Titans #28 VF+ $12; Wonder Woman #127 FN/VF $18; X-Men #11 GD $23.

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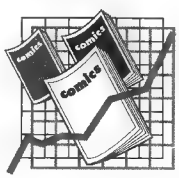
Golden Age continues to move well in all grades with midd.e to low end moving the best due to people not being aole to afford many of the high-end books. It seems that key Silver Age books in good to very good condition are beginning to show some new interest, specifically copies of Avengers #1 and X-Men #1. It appears that some collectors are now buying books with prices that are at or slightly under guide. Some of these collectors were previously buying low-grade Golden Age, but have switched to Silver Age due to a lack of availaoility of specific issues they desired. Collectors a so see the price decreases in low-grade Silver Age as a great opportunity to purchase books that they previously resisted due to price. The Toy and Collectibles market is continuing to see a large demand for Star Wars toys. Many collectors are really looking forward to the release of the prequel toys in May. Vintage Star Wars toys continue to sell well but some collectors are becoming resistant to the increasingly high prices. Superman, as always, is very much in demand for Toy and Premium collectors. One modern item that is on everyone's list is the life-size standee for the promotion of the postage stamp.

Golden Age: Detective Comics #168 (coverless) $44; Green Lantern #8 GD $118; Joker # 21 GD $25; Kid Comics #5 GD $100.

Silver Age: Amazing Spider-Man #40 GD $40; Fantastic Four #14 GD $26, #21 GD $25; Journey Into Mystery #85 VG $52.

Character Premiums/Toys: Annie membership kit VG $77, Captain Marvel premium ad paper $25; Star Wars Blue Snaggletooth figure loose VF $122; Superman Chalk Statue GD $91, Superman film viewer mint on card $88; Transformers Optimus Prime with VG box $45, Transformers Reflector giveaway loose $76, Transformers Rodimus Prime with VG box $86, Transformers Sky Lynx complete with VG box $51.

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.



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CBM Forum

BATMAN'S COMPLICATED ANCESTRY!

Opinion by Paul Fayter

We've all read Jenette Kahn's tribute page to Bob Kane in March and April DC comics. She recycles Kane's oft-told tale of his three chief "influences," all from the 1920s or early '30s, and therefore safely insulated from anyone like Bill Finger (who, I've always believed, deserved co-creator status). At least Ms. Kahn credits Finger with being Kane's "most important collaborator." She also notes the Bob Kane sketch of a "batman" dated 1/17/34.

As he did both earlier and afterwards (including in the interview with Will Murray), Kane in his Batman & Me named his main inspirations as the pulp hero Zorro (via The Mark of Zorro film with Douglas Fairbanks, Sr.); the evil character after whom the Mary Roberts Rinehart novel, The Bat, is titled (via the movie, The Bat Whispers); and that now-famous Leonardo da Vinci drawing of a batwinged glider.

As a professional historian of science, I can confirm from personal archival research that published autobiographical reminiscences are notorious not only for how what is related is shaped and "spun"—but for what is left out altogether. And what is true for Darwin, say, or Einstein, is true for other famous people, say superhero creators. Historical sources, whether textual or visual, must be read not only sympathetically and interpretively, but critically and skeptically. And so I thank Will Murray for his fascinating, provocative, and carefully argued account of Frank Foster Sr.'s "original" Batman. Like a good detective, Murray seeks to find out what really happened in the past. Further, he's aware that Frank Jr. has a personal interest in telling the story that he does.

And—to coin a cliché—what a story it is!

Murray's article convinces me that Foster's Batman ought probably to receive credit as a legitimate precursor of Kane's Batman. It seems, though, to represent an "evolutionary dead-end" in that, hidden for years in a filing cabinet, it bore no direct and viable offspring. Still, I am attracted by the speculation that Foster's sketches may have inspired Kane. I find it not at all unlikely that Kane and/or some National Periodical editor in New York saw—or at least heard of—those sketches in the early to mid 1930s. This is a possibility that, I admit, I wish were true.

We should, however, remember that artistic creations (like scientific discoveries) are social and not merely personal in nature. That is, they require public recognition and acceptance to make them legitimate "social facts" in a given culture. So just as Charles Darwin, largely due to his Origin of Species, is popularly seen as the one true discoverer of evolution by means of natural selection—despite the existence of selectionist predecessors and peers—so Bob Kane (and Bill Finger!) can be regarded as the legitimate originators of Batman, because it was their co-creation who graced the cover of Detective #27.

Bob Kane's oft-repeated version of the creation of Batman (and of Robin, the Joker, et al.) in my view under-valued the seminal contributions of people like Bill Finger and Jerry Robinson. It's never seemed right to me that the prominent "Bob Kane" signature was plastered over other artists' work, and that the creator credit, present whenever Batman appears, implicitly denies Finger's role. For one thing, Finger's wide reading in the pulps was certainly crucial to the creation and development of the Batman "mythos."

Kane's well-known references to Rinehart's Bat (with his eerie "bat-signal" and love of shadows), and to the earlier figure of Zorro (the acrobatic masked and caped crusader for justice, with his own hidden staircase to a "bat-cave" and his Bruce-Waynish alter ego) certainly ring true. Yet they also ring incompletely. The full story of Batman's deep and complex pulpish origins, though familiar in outline, has yet to be told. Besides Zorro, this story would include such figures as the Scarlet Pimpernel, the Phantom, the Black Bat, the Spider, and even the Crimson Avenger, introduced in Detective #20 (October 1938). And that's not all. Doc Savage, for instance, had a utility belt before Batman was born—one he used on at least one occasion to escape from one of those "certain-death" traps.

Then there are sources such as Bertram Russell's "The Bat-men of Thorium," in the May-July 1928 issue of Weird Tales. (The story concerns the discovery of a cave world under the Pacific inhabited in part by friendly and scientifically-advanced batwinged humans.) I've always thought that Kane's story of being inspired by da Vinci was a little suspicious. I'm not accusing him of having lied, but batwinged figures (usually demons) have been iconic in Western art since at least the period of medieval woodcuts. The Leonardo reference strikes me as an attempt to provide a frankly pulpish hero with some intellectual cachet, with a culturally respectable pedigree.

I would argue—as I hope to whenever I get enough time!—that while Batman's complicated ancestry is to be uncovered principally in the pulp fiction of the 1910s through 1930s, there are also crucial antecedents in 19th century genre fiction. Here's one example, from the nascent literature of science fiction, revealing the widespread iconography of "bat-men" well before Bob Kane was born, and much more familiar than an obscure da Vinci drawing.

I am referring to Richard Adams Locke's notorious "Moon Hoax" (actually a clever sci-fi satire on the willingness of many scientists, and the general public, to believe in extraterrestrial life) found in the pages of the New York

Sun in 1835 —retold in books and articles through succeeding decades—complete with illustrations showing batwinged humanlike lunar inhabitants. Briefly, the story goes like this. From 25 August through 31 August 1835 Locke, a journalist, produced a series of reports purporting to document the startling discoveries of the world-renowned astronomer John Herschel, working that summer at the Cape of Good Hope. Using a powerful new telescope, Herschel—who was, indeed, a famous English astronomer observing at the South African Cape that year—supposedly saw new and unsuspected details of the lunar landscape, including its native life-forms.

During this run, the Sun grew to have the largest circulation of any newspaper in the world. The reports created a national sensation, one that was avidly followed in Canada and Europe as well. The issues for August 28 and 29 described two species of intelligent (and apparently angelic, rather than demonic) "batmen." Their putative "scientific name" was revealed to be Vespertilio homo. This information was spread not only in tens of thousands of copies of the Sun; it was reprinted in other American newspapers as well. The series was also made available in a pamphlet which sold 60,000 copies. Lithographs of the batwinged moon-men—looking like the grandfathers of the stiff-winged Bat-Man in early Detective appearances—illustrated the series, and were even available for separate purchase.

The cultural memory of these bat-men was periodically reinforced. William N. Griggs, The Celebrated "Moon Story" (New York 1852) recounted the whole episode, and reprinted the articles themselves—something Locke did himself in his "A Discovery that the Moon has a vast Population of Human Beings" (New York, 1859). Throughout the rest of the century, numerous writers, including Edgar Allan Poe, wrote about what became known as the "Moon Hoax." Writers have continued to analyze the episode, while describing the bat-men, in the 20th century. (And note that the epicenter of the story was New York City, the "real" Batman's birthplace.) Examples from the period before publication of the Kane and Finger co-creation include a chapter in a book by Frank O'Brien published in New York in 1928, and a series of articles by William Barton in the astronomical magazine Sky during 1937.

So much more to learn—and so little spare time to do it! I'd better close here, since what was only intended as a short thank you letter is threatening to turn into an article. I'm eagerly awaiting the Batman issue of CBM.

BRAVE NEW WORLD– (R)EVOLUTION OF A HOBBY

Opinion by Jon Berk

What is the grade of a comic book? Has it been restored? These are the questions that are at the lips of every collector upon inspection and consideration of purchase of a book. Why are these questions most often asked? Because it affects the "value" of the book. Because it is important to those who do not wish to purchase "restored" books.

A collector paying "value" for a comic book desires confidence that the value paid is for the condition and state of preservation that he/she has paid for; that upon re-sale, when it comes to that, only value will be dickered upon; not condition or state of preservation.

For a neophyte seeking to enter the hobby or a collector ready to move into a more sophisticated area of the hobby, the cautionary advice from multiple sources and all the lights and bells flashing in the hobby for the "buyer to beware" of condition/restoration can be daunting and intimidating. It may well dissuade many to take the plunge into a different area of the hobby or enter the hobby at all.

In response to a perceived need to provide confidence and impartiality to the grading of comic books, the concept of certification was initiated by certain dealers and factions of the hobby. (Questions as to their motivation swirl about the hobby particularly since limited input was sought from the collecting community.) To execute upon that concept, the Comic Guaranty Corporation has been formed. It is the plan of this organization, whose sister companies have wide experience in grading coins and baseball cards, to respond to that articulated need. The goal of CGC is to instill a sense of impartiality, confidence, predictability and integrity to the grading of comic by the establishment of an independent grading certification service. Like any new concept, hesitation is mixed with skepticism. Hesitation that questions the need for such a service in the first place and skepticism that questions the motivation of those promoting the "need" for the service. Frankly, there is an innate distrust of dealer motivation by many collectors.

We are a small enough community that if someone stands in the front of the boat, those in the rear know it. So the buzz of a certification service and the "new" grading system spread like wildfire throughout the hobby resulting in rumor and innuendo. Comic book collectors, being the eclectic and independent lot we are, are sorta like herding cats when it comes to moving together in a direction with consensus and agreement. The comic book hobbyist desires to have the comfort of acceptance by consensus over time, rather than the impression that something "new" and "different" is being thrust upon us. There has always been (and always be) a love-hate relationship between dealers and collectors—each often viewing the other (for a variety of legitimate and non-legitimate reasons) with "caution." However, as in many relationships, the relation is a symbiotic one—both collector and dealer needing the other.

Comic book collecting and the comic book hobby, as other hobbies and pursuits is under a constant state of maturation and evolution. Sophistication/maturation and evolution/change is not a matter of "choice," it is inevitable. The issue, therefore, is the acceptance of, and the application of that evolution. Change for the sake of change is unwarranted. Change that is appropriate, accepted and based on informed facts is the only course.

Apparently with this in mind and aware of the storm of controversy that had taken place, and with its experience in the area of other collectibles, CGC reached out to a cross-section of collectors at its New Jersey offices on February 13, 1999. I was invited along with fellow collectors Mike Dalessandro, Joe Serpico, Dan Kramer, Doug Snell, Jon Mankuta and Roger Longo. Moderated by Jon Maben and David Stump of CGC (and attended by designated grader, Steven Borock), the conference was intended to be informational and to seek input as to the planned procedures to institute an impartial system of comic book certification.

From my viewpoint, I was impressed by the professionalism and sincerity that they conveyed in an extended informational and question-and answer session as to the service to be provided. The purpose was to answer any ques-

tions we had (and invited anyone to call after the conference with additional questions) to allay fears and suspicions that may surround the service. Ultimately the success of the concept and the service will turn upon the quality of the service provided and the acceptance it generates in the collecting community. Although certain questions and wider issues still remain for me (the real motivation of the proponents of the system, the manner in which the grading system change was made without wider consultation, removing the stigma of "linkage" between CGC and its industry promoters), the service, if conducted properly, may well provide important assurance for new initiates to the hobby and reassurance for a part of our hobby. Also, I will take Maben and Stump at their word that they genuinely were seeking our input and advice, and were not merely carrying out a politically correct "schmoozing" conference.

The clear message that they conveyed is that CGC intends to bring the highest standards of integrity and impartiality to the grading process. They wish to see the comic book hobby grow. CGC cannot be successful unless the hobby is successful. They seek to establish with comic books the same reputation that they have established in coins: consistency, accuracy and impartiality. In the simplest terms, CGC will examine a comic book, check it for restoration and assign it a nomenclature grade and corresponding numerical grade. The book will then be sealed in a specially designed case, currently under development, with the grade certification.

"Grades, per se, are not guaranteed," stated Maben. Their certification service provides an "impartial third party expert opinion" as to the condition and restoration state of a book. (Obviously, such a service by imparting third party impartiality seeks to fulfill the same service that the free grading service that the American Association of Comicbook Collectors has been providing to the major auction houses for years.) Obviously, without "cracking" the holder, many forms of restoration may not be detected. Stump stated that CGC is working on a policy with this in mind. CGC hopes to demonstrate good judgment and discretion in the appropriate context and "to be as fair as possible." Concern about post purchase tampering is all too much a concern for a cracked holder. Additionally, CGC is concerned that even the most experienced collector or dealer may damage a book upon removal from a holder, damage for which CGC naturally refuses to be liable. The following is my understanding, drawn from the conference, as to how the system will work. The marketplace will soon be flooded with information as to the process.

CERTIFICATION SERVICE

Submission

CGC may establish a pool of authorized dealers for submission of books. Designation of an "authorized dealer" would be made upon application and approval by CGC. Submission may also be made by a hobby organization such as the American Association of Comicbook Collectors if the appropriate endorsements are forthcoming. If the Association or other hobby organization is not interested, CGC will consider starting its own organization for submissions. Twenty per cent commissions will be paid to these submitting authorized dealers or organizations. Additionally, CGC, unlike in the coin context, is considering establishing an "associate" status for part-time dealers/qualified collectors who may submit their own books directly for certification. Anyone may come directly to their office for a submission under the "Walk Through" plan as more fully described below.

The reason given for this dealer system was two-fold:

1. CGC believes strongly in not standing in the way of existing customer-dealer relationships, and

2. Since books must be packaged and invoiced correctly, they wish to avoid any problems with less sophisticated submitters about claimed damage to their books.

Concern was expressed at the conference that "forcing" collectors to submit books through authorized dealers may subject collectors to pressure from some dealers questioning why books were not submitted through them. The organizational avenue and possible associate status may address that concern.

Conflict of Interest

Maben declared that certain industry individuals came up with the concept of certification because they believed it would be good for the hobby. These individuals met with Maben and Stump and requested that CGC develop a protocol to execute on that concept. In answer to direct questions of the attendees, CGC stated that no one in the comic community has a direct or indirect financial interest in the service or products collateral to that service. While acknowledging that individuals such as Bruce Hamilton have been instrumental as to his "constructive input," none of these individuals are under the employ of CGC "at this time." (While Hamilton, in conjunction with Mark Wilson, is apparently working on an encasement product, CGC has independently contracted with an outside vendor to design its shell.) No one who is employed by CGC may be commercially involved in the selling or buying of comics.

Certainly, in its initial phases, the books are going to be submitted through those dealers that have initiated and promoted this service; those whose support CGC will most need in order to be successful. How anonymity or the appearance of impartiality will be maintained as this early stage is unclear. To establish its integrity, CGC will have to meet this early challenge.

Grading and Classification

The book, after receipt, will be separately bar coded to ensure anonymity of the submitter. The book will be first reviewed for page count, coupon removal etc. by a team grader. Thereafter, the book will be examined and graded by a primary grader (presently Steven Borock). In addition to the grade, the book will be classified in one of three ways: "Universally Accepted" (green code); "Qualified" (yellow code) and "Restored" (red code).

Much discussion was generated in this area. Thoughts as to grading systems are discussed below. Suffice to say, at this point, traditional nomenclature grades will be assigned with a corresponding numerical grade under a ten point system. Maben noted that in an "ideal world" the book would be graded as the submitter would. He admits, frankly, that that is not going to occur. The next best thing is to have a consistent standard. The rub, as noted

by the conference attendees, is what that standard is. Borock, who has been a collector for years will, in addition to his own experience, speak with others as to grading standards. Questions were raised as to the propriety of having only a single primary grader since each comic book grader brings his/her own "bias and prejudice" to grading (i.e. some "defects" are more significant to some than others). Suggestions of at least two "primary" graders were made.

Issues that generated discussion was the philosophy of CGC that a book will be graded as high as it can before questioning whether particular attributes decrease the grade. Attendees questioned whether this would "dilute" grading standards. Also it was urged that if grading standards would be different from the traditional nomenclature standards, that those standards be published. There are no plans to publicize the definitions of the grades as used by CGC. However, Maben insists that while the corporate goal is to set the standard of grading for the hobby, it looks to "stand along side" other grading organizations such as the AACC committee that has served at Sotheby's and Christie's for many years. It was not clear how, if the certification service becomes widely accepted, as they plan, how this service would not "supplant" other groups. For this reason, although it was the impression that the grading definitions would comport with Overstreet definitions, it was again urged that the grading standards by which CGC would certify are disseminated. (Logically this would have to be the case since the designation of a value for a VF book by the Overstreet Price Guide would be meaningless, if a CGC "VF" was different than a "VF" valued book in the Guide.)

Restoration will be noted. CGC intends to be the premiere restoration detection service in the hobby. To this end, in addition to Mr. Borock's experience in comic books, CGC is paying for Borock to participate in special restoration detection sessions with Matt Wilson of Fantasy Masterpieces. State of the art equipment will be available for his use. Frankly, despite the animated debate that surrounds the creation of a grading certification service, a restoration detection service that "guarantees" its service (as qualified below) may in and of itself be worth the price of the

COMMENT

GRADING AS COMMUNICATION OF CONDITION

by Jon Berk

Grading, subject to some basic standards, is more an "art" than a "science." Grading can be, like truth, beauty and contact lenses, in the eye of the beholder. Grading a comic book is nothing more than communicating to another its condition. This communication is critical so that when one agrees to sell/buy a book for a stated price, the condition of that book has been effectively communicated so the seller/buyer can determine the value he wishes to attach to that condition. Unless the seller and buyer are speaking the same "language," communication breaks down and the buyer does not receive a book in the condition for which he has agreed to pay agreed value. Is the seller's language of VG+, the same as the buyer's?

Accordingly, one may call a grade anything one wants. (Q: "What is the condition of the book?" A: "Nice.") As long as the seller and buyer are speaking the same language, condition has been effectively communicated and the buyer has consented to pay the agreed value for that condition of book. Establishing a so called universal grading system is nothing more than attempting to make sure everyone is speaking the "same language." (However, it would be nice to have the definition of each nomenclature grade disseminated.) The Comic Guaranty Corporation obviously is attempting to employ a consistent grading procedure that "assumes" consistent communication as to grade. The goal of the CGC is to impart consistency and impartiality to the grade assignment of a book. This goal is, obviously, laudatory. Since the grade of a book relates directly to its value and marketability, the importance of grading/communicating effectively the condition of a book is obvious. The ultimate question is what the CGC grading interpretation will be. (No matter what anyone says it is going to be the "Steve Borock" grading language.) As soon as one "learns" the CGC/Borock language, one knows what to expect when a grade is conferred. (This is no different than the expectation collectors have with any dealer they have purchased from throughout the years; each with their own idiosyncratic grading protocols.) If the CGC/Borock language interpretation is generally accepted, the language of grade/condition will be understood and become a valuable asset. To buy as VF, to price at VF and to sell at VF does have its rewards. The grade / slab label from CGC will simply reflect the "accent" of Mr. Borock. (The AACC at the auction grading sessions has avoided this individual stamp by having six graders, eliminating the high and low grade, and averaging the middle four. Impartiality for grading of books has been the hallmark of the AACC grading sub-committee for years. Wherein each committee brings over 50 years of combined grading experience to the table.) Therefore, to achieve a more universal language and hobby acceptance, the best procedure would be to have a book reviewed by at least two graders, with any notable difference resolved by conferencing with a third. Since CGC will not guarantee its grades, but only assure that its grading is impartial, it is even more critical that the grading be diversified over more than one grader.

Since no standards of grading are published by CGC it is assumed that the VF grade assigned by CGC is the VF standard as set by Overstreet/hobby standards. If not, two languages are being spoken, one for grading and one for pricing. It is strongly recommended that CGC reconsider and promulgate standards equivalent to each grading nomenclature and have a book reviewed by more than one grader.

service, and go a long way to instill confidence in an area of the hobby that concerns and intimidates novice, as well as seasoned, collectors.

Except for some Golden Age books, any restored book will be classified as "restored." As for Golden Age books, because of their increased scarcity, although all restoration will be noted, books with "minute pinprick" color touch or "minute glue" will qualify for the "Universally Accepted" category. The genesis of this decision appears to derive from the fact that several Edgar Church ("Mile High") comic books have been subject to this "minor" process. It would be a "disservice," Maben declared, to those who own Mile Highs to classify such books in the "restored" category. This distinction would extend beyond Church books. It was emphasized, however, that "full disclosure" would be made of all restoration detected. The attendees at the conference inquired as to exactly where this line will be drawn as to "minute green code accepted restoration" and "red code restoration." That "line" has yet to be defined.

"Qualified" would be a category reserved for very few books such as high grade books with a clipped coupon not affecting art. It was unclear whether books which were NM but had a two inch back cover tear would fall within this category. The nature and extent of restoration will be fully noted. Maben stated that beside personal preference, restoration is an "issue of disclosure." It was urged that CGC, in addition to consulting with collectors and dealers, consult with restorers so to obtain consensus definitions of "minor," "moderate" and "extensive" restoration. Classification of restoration (CGC will note "professional" versus "amateur" restoration) may be of significance so to categorize "desirability" of certain books even with certain "restoration." (Compare a tear seal with a trimmed book; the latter should clearly be avoided from a "value" perspective.) Stating that a book is "restored" is like saying some one has a knee problem. It is too general. In addition to specific defects noted, classification of such restoration as "minor," "moderate," and "extensive" needs to be established since some restoration (cleaning, tear seal) is more "acceptable" (and, hence, increases "value" and marketability) than other forms of restoration (piece replacement).

Page quality will not be specifically noted unless of inferior or superior quality. In other words, no page quality is noted unless deemed to be "white," "off-white," "brown" or "brittle." As a by-product of the service, "census" information will be maintained and published as to the particular books submitted , the number in a particular grade. Scarcity comparison, as often argued in the hobby, can be based on empirical data of CGC.

Service Levels and Cost

The cost of the certification service (which includes encasement) is a product of the submitted book value and/or the desired turnaround time for the service. The top level of service is "Walk Through." Certification and encasement will be performed within two hours. Books which are in excess of a certain value will be subject to this service level. (This value dependent aspect is a by-product of the cost of the insurance protection program purchased by CGC. In other words, the less time CGC has items of value on premises, the less its insurance costs.) The planned cost of this service is $85 (excluding shipping and insurance costs).

The fee includes certification and encasement. Plans are in the works for digital reproduction of book covers, for an additional fee, in a stylized "brochure." Exemplars of coin reproduction were quite impressive. Comic books, with their color variables, present special challenges, which CGC believes may be met by its state of the art equipment.

Different levels of service will be provided dependent on dollar value and turnaround time (three days, one week, 21 days). The least expensive service will be priced in the range of $10-$15 (which includes encasement)—minimum submission of three books. For this service, books cannot be over a certain value.

Encasement

Development is well under way by CGC of an encasement product. CGC reports it has commissioned testing of comic book paper to assure that the encasement product meets the requirements of the collecting community—ultra-violet protection, dissecant and off-gassing materials, sizing so that the cases will fit in comic boxes, and "ribbing" for effective storage and preventing scratching of the case. Alternative case designs were shown at the conference. Consideration is being given to color-coding an edge to denote the time period of the book.

The front and back covers will be fully visible. The edges of the book will be fully visible from three sides; with the top edge partially obstructed by the certification label. The book will be placed in mylar which will be sealed on four sides and then "suspended" by fixing each corner of the sealed mylar to the four posts of the case. (If the book is sealed in mylar, it is unclear how the book will "breathe.") The case may be re-sealable, although, "cracking" of the case will void its certification. Obviously, comic books are not two dimensional as coins and baseball cards. Many collectors may well crack the case so to fully enjoy the story and art within. It remains unclear how many individuals, notwithstanding certification, will, nonetheless, "crack" the case before purchase. This conundrum may lead to great extra expense to a seller who "cracks" a case to sell the book and the book does not sell. "Cracking" the holder voids the certification. Final Thoughts...

It remains to be seen if the above will become an orderly evolution or disorderly revolution of the comic book hobby. Questions will swirl how this system of certification can be effectively executed. In the small boat of the comic book community, issues of conflict of interest or bias, certainly in the early stages, will continue. Perceptions will be as important, if not more important than reality at this point for CGC. The appearance of "linkage" between CGC and its dealer proponents may be fatal to CGC if not dissipated from the first certified book.

However, if these perceptions can be overcome, and true impartiality and consistency brought to its service, CGC may well provide an important service for a portion of the comic book marketplace by providing confidence to the buying and selling context and lessening fears of being "taken." As a veteran collector I still am cautious in many buying contexts. Obviously, that "caution" may be converted to

fear and neurosis to the less sophisticated buyer in the marketplace. CGC may provide the necessary comfort for that group and others.

The above represents my personal opinions and is not intended to express nor does it express the opinion of the American Association of Comicbook Collectors of which I am a director. [© Jon Berk]

STILL RAVING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS —by Keith Contarino

The Proposed Grading Service

An Historical Perspective

Actually, the concept of a grading system has been around for some time. (I first proposed one to Jon Warren more than 10 years ago.) I have read (and heard) numerous arguments, most notably Bill Howard's who was particularly eloquent. I want to approach it from a different slant than did Bill, though.

For the sake of argument, let's assume for a moment that a cadre of professional comic dealers can get together, decide who will be grading books, and decide whose books will be allowed to be graded... and it doesn't represent a conflict of interest. (If you can believe that, of course, you can believe almost anything!!)

But even with the above stipulations there is NO WAY a grading service for comics will work. Jon Warren and I tried for a solid year to work it out.

The problem, of course, is that comic books have insides. Coins, stamps, and cards do not. There aren't any coupons to look for or pages to count with those other collectibles. Nor is inside paper quality a problem with the others like it is with comics.

Another reason it won't work is people want to check the pages before they buy. Look at an example for illustration. Suppose someone has a Fantasy #15 graded and slabbed. Let's say the grade is NM 9.0. Next year I want to buy the book. What's the first thing I'm going to do? Break the seal and check the pages, duh! Now the grade is worthless. Also, this can't be done through the mail as now I can switch a nice 8.2 that I had before. The logistics just aren't suited for the slabbing of comics to work and I think anyone who gives this any thought will arrive at this same conclusion.

There's yet another reason this service won't work and it's one that was first voiced to

GRADING PROTOCOL

Comment and Critique of The Proposed Ten Point System

by Jon Berk

The Proposed Ten Point System

The Comic Guaranty Corporation plans to use, as initiated by some in the hobby, a proposed ten point system with "split grade" nomenclature. There will be no further numerical distinction within a particular grade. (Compare the Overstreet-Carter 100 point system which assigns three numerical options within a particular grade nomenclature.) Under this system a VF+ will be 8.5. (Under the 100 point system VF+ could be a 85, 87 or 89.) Since there will be no further numerical distinctions in the ten point system, whatever perceived difficulty of use of the numerical grade classes can easily be avoided. (Although the 100 point system helps to identify a really nice Fine+ which had before been F++). Additionally, since the nomenclature grade dictates the numerical grade, the numerical grade is clearly derivative, and, in a real sense, is irrelevant in the ten point system. Even if the "split grade" nomenclature is utilized, a simple numerical modification can be made that can easily accommodate both systems.

Some feel that the 100 point system is "unworkable" because of the numerical variation within a grade. (Coin collectors seem to be able to handle number variation with a nomenclature grade.) Such an observation may well be valid. However, except for the alteration of certain numerical grades, it is unclear how a "96" under the 100 point system differs from the "9.6" of the ten point system. "Sophistry in motion," if you will.

Since the grading nomenclature remains the same, the difference between the number assigned to a nomenclature grade in the ten point system and the number assigned in the 100 point system for its nomenclature counter-part can only be viewed, in this man's opinion, as arbitrary. Elimination of the three number grades for a nomenclature grade under the 100 point system may well be a worthy modification. However, the proposed ten point system, beside the injection of nomenclature controversy, also has numerous fundamental internal inconsistencies that undermines its validity.

The numerical difference in the ten point system between NM and NM+ is .2 (as opposed to 2 in the 100 point system). The numerical difference between VF and VF+, VF- and VF, F and F+, F- and F, etc. is .5 under the ten point system (as compared to 5 points between the mid-numerical grade of the 100 point system). However, unlike the 100 point system, the proposed ten point system is placing undue weight on the split-grade. Proceeding from F to F+ and VF- to VF and VF to VF+ and VF+ to NM- has always been in the same increment. Such distinctions have been recognized by 5 point increments in the 100 point system. Some have argued for split grades, such as F/VF to grade those books that are better than Fine but less than VF- and VF/NM to grade those books which are better than VF+ but less than NM-. Like F++ or VF++, split grades are nothing more than a name label to describe the condition of a book. However, like F++ or VF++, etc., split grades are nothing more than an in-between grade of the established grade of Fine, Very Fine and Near Mint. Logically, the numerical equivalency should be half of that grading increment, i.e. .25 (.5 divided by 2). However, the proposed ten point system assigns these "in-between" grades a full .5 increment, instead of the logical "in-between" numerical equivalency of .25. (Rounding off to a .3 value may be more workable for the collector.) Even assuming use of a split grade nomenclature (and it is clear that many in the hobby use split grade nomenclature), it is inexplicable why an "in-between" grade should be assigned a "full" grade increment as given to other grade increments other than to base an increase in price for a book beyond its "in-between" status. Certainly in-between grade nomenclature need not be specifically adopted in standard grading scale.

me by Steven Fishler many years ago.

When I first talked to Steve about grading and grading services (I spoke with many dealers about this back in the late 1980s) he told me he didn't care what any grading service thought. He didn't care what I thought about any particular grade on any particular book because he knew how to grade and wasn't going to change his standards or use anyone else's service and neither would his customers.

Many other dealers made similar statements and this was the main reason I dropped the idea. Steve's absolutely correct. He and I will never agree on grades on particular books. He sells a lot more comics than I do so why should he. But this isn't about two dealer's with a difference of opinion. If you get any group of collectors/dealers/hobbyists together and ask them to grade a book, they will rarely if ever agree about the grade. But, more importantly, they WON'T CHANGE their INDIVIDUAL MINDS AND ACCEPT ANOTHER'S STANDARD! That's why auction houses use a panel of experts.

What dealer with any confidence in his or her own ability to grade comics would want to use another's set of standards?

The reason, in my mind, why PSA has been successful is that cards are infinitely easier to grade and it was easier to get a universal set of standards universally accepted.

I'm not going to accept this new service as the final WORD in grading anymore than I accept any of the existing grading services... and I doubt the hobby will either.

Even if CGC publishes their standards (which other services have refused to do), I doubt it will make any difference to most dealers... or their regular customers.

I simply can't foresee the day when one of my customers wants a book verified and slabbed. Besides, you can't open slabbed books anyway and most of us like to look at our comics on the inside from time to time.

So there's my proverbial two cents worth. Hope this adds something constructive to the debate.

GRADING PROTOCOL
by Jon Berk *continued*

Further, if split grades are utilized, VF/NM, F/VF, and its split grade brethren, should be the highest grade of VF, F, etc. and not the lowest of NM, VF, etc. By recognizing this fact, each grade level of the proposed ten point system has four sub-nomenclature grades. In other words under the proposed system, VF/NM is the highest grade of "VF," F/VF is the highest form of "F," VG/F is the highest form of "VG" and G/VG is the highest form of "G," each with four grade variants. Accordingly, the proposed ten point system to be consistent with itself mandates that VF/NM, since it is the highest form of VF, logically is a form of VF and, therefore, cannot qualify in the 9.0 level which is reserved for forms of NM, not VF. If VF/NM is grouped with the NM variants, this grading level would have five sub-categories. Placing VF/NM in the NM category increases arbitrarily this controversial hybrid in value.

Finally, although the grade below NM, VF, F, VG, and G is NM-, VF-, F-,VG-, and G-, respectively under the proposed ten point system, the nomenclature of the proposed ten point system declares the grade below Mint to be NM/M rather than the internally consistent "Mint-". A Proposed Compromise.

The hundred and proposed ten point systems are easily modifiable to accommodate a ten point system and to maintain the integrity of the numerical increments:

Mint	10.
NM	9.5
NM-	9.0
VF+	8.5
VF	8.0
VF-	7.5
F+	7.0
F	6.5
F-	6.0
VG+	5.5
VG	5.0
VG-	4.5
G+	4.0
G	3.5
G-	3.0
Fair	2.0
Poor	1.0

This grading system has been endorsed by the officers and Board of Directors of the American Association of Comicbook Collectors. This system provides for three "types" of Good, Very Good, Fine, Very Fine and Near Mint. This system does not incorporate split grade nomenclature. If the "problem" identified by the ten point system is that people can only use "0"s and "5"s easily, the above accommodates that concern. As observed above, since the numerical grade derives directly from the nomenclature grade, the former is irrelevant. (Prediction: Notwithstanding the above, it is inevitable that as any ten point system is used, that dealers and collectors alike will utilize other numbers beside "5" and "0" to indicate a variation of an increment grade. Whatever ten point system is used, it will shortly look like the 100 point system that it is intended to "replace.")

However, without significant input from major areas of the hobby, the wheels appear to be in motion to adopt the "proposed" ten point system by fiat before it is considered by a cross-section of hobbyists. If the real goal of the ten point system is to "institutionalize" split grade nomenclature, that is, indeed, a different question and issue. If the real goal is to push this split grade into a numerical class in which is does not belong, that too is a different issue. Does the hobby "need" VF/NM, F/VF, etc?

Even if some wish to utilize this in-between grade, numerical grades of 8.75 (or 8.8), 6.75 (or 6.8) etc., precisely, honestly and accurately accommodate these controversial grading nomenclatures. If the institutionalization of split grade nomenclature becomes part of the grading lexicon, let's input its numerical equivalency honestly and accurately. A differential of .5 for a in- between grade simply is not valid. A simple arithmetic process can be performed, as it has for years, to compute the value of books perceived to be in an in-between grade condition. The above compromise can accommodate that differential.

There is an apparent effort to have "9.0" or better become a shorthand label for "investment" quality material. It may well be that novice entrants to the hobby will

be steered only to "9.0 or better" books. Placing VF/NM in the 9.0 category would increase the "population" of books in this elite category. Such a possibility should not be the raison d'être for placing VF/NM (even if used in the grading lexicon) in the 9.0 category for several reasons.

On a practical level, new entrants who have significant sums to spend can easily be educated that for Gold and many early Silver Age books, VF+ (8.5) may be the best grade available. Certainly such a money-eyed initiate is sophisticated enough to inquire as to the meaning of condition and understand that "8.5" is "investment grade" for these books before purchasing. (As in other collectible areas, a portion of the buyers are more interested in "investment/best quality" material as opposed to being a "true collector," per se. Of course, it is a rare "true collector" who desires to see sums spent on books go down in value either.) No magic significance need be attached to "9.0" for this chronological age of books. Certainly, these moneyed initiates have made inquiry of experienced investment advisors before making stock or similar investments. Why should one assume that their investment acumen cannot deal with the concept of "8.5" being "investment grade" for this chronological class of books with the input of the honest professionals in the comicbook marketplace?

On a realistic basis, the population of Golden Age comic books which will qualify for the higher grade assignment is extremely small. It is not as if an entrant can call and say, "I'll take Action #1-10 in 9.0 or better condition." Placing VF/NM in the 9.0 category has the appearance of trying to increase the population of "investment grade" books for this age of books. So-called VF/NM Golden Age books may well be "investment grade." However, it is unnecessary to classify this nomenclature, if used, in 9.0 category to increase the population of so-called investment grade books. In contrast, the number of books that will qualify as VF/NM post 1965 is plentiful. To declare 9.0 or better as "investment grade" as a universal statement should apply to all ages of comic books. Since the population for earlier books in high grade is so limited, their value and marketability will not be effected by limiting 9.0 to NM- or better One will rapidly learn that "lower" grades of VF+ or VF (or F+, for that matter) may be the only available grade in the Golden Age marketplace.

However, to suggest that Amazing Spider-Man #34, is "investment grade" because it is VF/NM/9.0 would be a disservice to new collectors of this age. (Remember, assuming the modern comic book commenced in 1933, books after 1966 represent chronologically half the life of comic book existence.) To allow a newcomer to believe that books after 1966 that are "VF/NM" and assigned 9.0 under the proposed system qualify as "investment grade" for this chronological age of books simply is not so. In other words, a collector of the smaller population of VF books in the Golden Age will not be "hurt" as to "investment" potential of certain Golden Age books as opposed to the collector who believes that any post 1966 book that is VF/NM/9.0 is the grade to purchase. To a large extent, the perspective of the numerical value of VF/NM depends whether one is viewing the collecting marketplace from 1999 backward or 1933 forward. However, to serve the interest of the entire timeline of comic book collecting, candor would dictate, in addition to the above reasons, that 9.0 be reserved for forms of NM and not be used to artificially elevate a split grade VF/NM book into a class with a resulting imprimatur of being "investment grade."

As recognized by the 100 point system, the number of 90 or the compromise system with 9.0 is reserved only for a true form of NM, not its bastard son. "Pushing" VF/NM into the 9.0 level, which is reserved for a form of NM condition books, simply is not intellectually valid. The above "compromise" is more in keeping with logic and consistent with the traditions of our hobby, while at the same time advancing it. Additionally, it should soothe rather than roil the swelling opposition to a proposal that contains unnecessary controversy.

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LES FIELDS

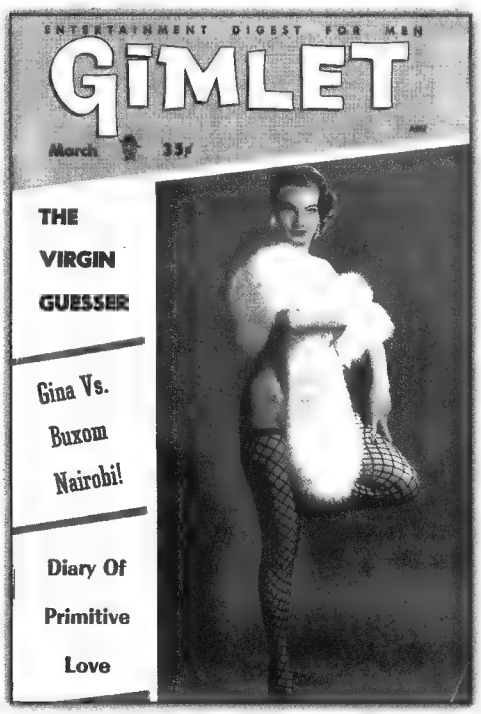
(*Cont. from page 80*)

Once his father died, Les decided to change the thrust of the business. Following the runaway success of Playboy and Adam in the late '50s, Les set to work publishing a line of bottom-drawer "men's magazines" with titles like *Gimlet* and *Stork*. These ventures were not without their share of controversy. "Les would take photos from other girlie magazines and make collages, sort of. He would paste one girl's head on another girl's body. He did it himself. He wasn't very good at it," Fields one-time assistant Hy Gold recalls. "One of the publishers he was swiping from sent a couple of thugs over and they trashed Les's office. Les didn't bother to report it to the cops."

Les Fields in 1965

Undaunted, Fields tried another tactic. "He would have his wife Mitzi pose for the nudie pages. He would have her wear different wigs and makeup so she looked like different girls," Gold recounts. Les would also use some of the costumes he inherited from the theatrical troupe who had used an empty room in his office for storage. "He would have her dress up as a naked clown or a naked Eskimo or what have you. It was humiliating." It didn't help that Mitzi wasn't exactly pin-up material. "Mitzi was one of those girls you would recommend for her personality, let's just say. And she liked to eat. She really liked to eat," Gold says somewhat sadly.

Gimlet and the rest of the line were history by the beginning of 1963. Bundles of magazines were sent to the Fields American office. Les desperately tried to unload the magazines wherever he could, but to no avail. "No one would take them, not even the garbage men. Les would have to have them carted to the dump and that meant dealing with a trucking company, and most of them were run by the Mob. And the Mob also controlled the books Les was swiping from," Gold says. Recycling was a long time in the future at this point. But even the Mob couldn't deter Les Fields. His brother Barry recounts, "Les sold off most of the furniture in the office, and then made tables and desks by putting plywood over the stacks. Most of the Wonderful books were created on those very tables. The rest of the stacks were used as chairs."



Fields American's flagship title, Gimlet

After hearing reports of the surging success of Marvel's new style of superheroes, Les decided it was time to cash in. He had been publishing numerous unintentional one-shot knockoffs of *MAD* magazine with titles like *ILL, Screwy, Zany,* and *Yoks*, but they all flopped. Fields had a stable of artists, mostly freshmen at the High School of Art and Design in Manhattan. None of them were paid, in fact Fields would often charge them for the honor of having their work published. He told them that "a stint at Fields American was a ticket to the big time!" None of them would go on to work for anyone else once Fields American folded.

But many of them were big fans of the new-fangled Marvel Comics. Fields decided to exploit these fans/artists for his ideas for his own line of comics. Most of the artists did their work for Fields in grueling late-night work sessions. While they toiled, Fields would ask the artists to come up with ideas for superheroes. It was the ideas of these young and idealistic boys that Fields would develop for the "Wonderful Age of Comics."

Once Les and Barry had copyrighted and trademarked all the characters their artists had invented they went to work putting together comic stories. It was during those late-night work sessions that Les invented the so-called "Wonderful Method" of story-telling....

Les loved playing charades, you know, like at parties?" says Barry, "So he would act out a story in pantomime, miming out all the different characters in a story." Thus Fields would silently flail about the office, pretending he was some character or another, often at the same time. And he expected the young and exhausted artists to interpret his miming and construct a coherent narrative for the Fields to script. Once the layouts were in place, Barry would often erase the drawings of the lead characters and substitute them with Marvel swipes or even tracings. Thus the young artists were unable to ever claim any ownership over the Wonderful characters.

Fields kicked off the Wonderful Age of Comics with *The Thrilling Three* and *Thor. The Thrilling Three* was a wafer-thin knockoff of Marvel's *Fantastic Four*. Like Marvel's book there were also three males and a female character. The origin issue explained that the Thrilling Three came together after gaining super-powers during industrial accidents. The leader was Mister Flexible, who gained amazing flexibility after being caught on an Atomic rubber stretching rack. The strongman of the team was Mortarman, a former bricklayer who was encased in radioactive brick and mortar after an Atomic power plant accident. The third member was Inflammabilly, Master of Atomic Flame. Rounding out the team was his sister Miss Meek. She had the power of super-silence. "She could be so quiet that people would forget she was there," says Barry. Asked why they were called a threesome and not a foursome, Barry replied, "that was the point. Everyone was always forgetting Miss Meek. When Les came up with that gimmick he walked around the office shouting, "Am I not the greatest god-damn

Fighting for capitalism and copyright infringement-The Thrilling Three#1 (Oct 1966).

genius in this ever-loving world."

Thor was more a rip-off of National's Superman than of Marvel's character. The Norse god Thor came to Earth and gave himself a crewcut and landed himself a job as a television anchorman. Fields would swear that Kirby ripped him off when he went to National in the '70s and made Clark Kent a TV newsman. During his adventures, Thor would speak to his father "Mr. Odin" on his Atomic video-phone. No reason for this was given other than the fact that Fields wanted an "Atomic-something" in all the Wonderful books. In both the *Thrilling Three* and *Thor* comics there were house ads for the upcoming Wonderful books. Shown were the hopelessly amateurish cover designs for *Colonel United States*, the *Astounding Daddy LongLegs, Metal Master* and the *Invincible Monster*.

A few days after the Wonderful books hit the few stands that would carry them, Fields American received a cease-and-desist order from Marvel publisher Martin Goodman's lawyers. The order alleged unfair competition and copyright infringement. Named in the suit were all the characters in every Wonderful book and in the house ads. Fields claimed the order was lost in the mail even though it was delivered by a process server. Several more followed.

"When Les found out the cease-and-desist order included *Thor,* he hit the roof," Barry recounts, "he was furious. He screamed, 'Thor now? Oh sure, Stan Lee created everything! He got in his frigging time machine and told the Vikings all about Thor! Did he invent Hercules too?'"

Fields insisted his Thor was different. "Les said that his Thor didn't look like some god-damned sissy beatnik, he looked like a marine. And what's more, his hammer was a lot bigger," says Barry.

More problematic was the *Thrilling Three*. The minute the second issue (featuring the villain Professor Peril) hit the stands, Goodman called Fields and started screaming. "Marty said, 'If you continue to publish this book, I will sue for the rest of your life. I will sue your children and I will sue your children's children,'" recalls Barry.

Fields countered that Marvel had ripped him off, that Lee and Kirby had seen the sketches for the Wonderful characters when they were moonlighting for *Gimlet*. "I was listening on the other line when Goodman called," says Barry, "When Les said that, I heard the phone hit the floor and it sounded like someone was running away from the phone screaming and hollering."

Little was heard from Goodman or Lee until a delivery man came to the door with a fold-up cot. "There was a note attached saying it was for Les so he could sleep in the courtroom, the implication being that he wouldn't even be able to leave once Marvel's lawyers got a hold of him."

Colonel United States was even harder to defend. Colonel United States was in reality Steve Robbins, a foot soldier who received the Atomic Soldier serum so he could fight the Communists in Viet Nam. "Les wanted the books to be topical," said Gold. Wonderful's artists followed Captain America's costume closely, and went so far to supply Colonel United States with a shield. "Les designed that shield himself, he said he got the idea from watching the riot footage from Watts."

Colonel ...United ...States!

Les did his sketches in crayon on pages of unsold *Gimlets*. "Some of the *Gimlet* pages were very light 'cause Les used a crummy printer, and he got the crayons from a dumpster of a school on the Upper East side," Barry recounts, 'The schools were in a race to spend as much money as they could when Lindsay got in, and they would throw perfectly good books, supplies, pencils, desks, you name it, away. Les got rolls of newsprint, glue, everything there. All the Wonderful books used something from those dumpsters at one point or another."

Daddy-Longlegs' origin explained from ADLL #1 (Oct 1966).

After *Colonel United States* and the *Thrilling Three*, it only got comically worse. The next book to hit the stands was the *Astounding Daddy LongLegs*. Originally called the Astounding Daddy LongLegs Man, this book told the story of Johnny Jenkins, a high school outcast who was bitten by a talking daddy longlegs with strange magical powers.

As before, the phone rang when *Daddy LongLegs* #1 hit the stands. "Goodman had one of the first speaker-phones and when Les picked all he heard was laughing. Goodman had Stan and Jack in his office and they were all rolling on the floor laughing."

They probably stopped laughing when they saw *Metal Master* and the *Invincible Monster,* Wonderful's hijackings of Iron Man and the Incredible Hulk, respectively. Fields was particularly brazen in his Hulk knock-off. Named the "Monster" after Les and Barry couldn't find a suitable synonym for "Hulk," The

LES FIELDS

Invincible Monster was also green-skinned. "Barry thought they should make him purple, but Les said that Marvel just stole the green color from Frankenstein anyway," says Gold. In order to differentiate the "Monster" from the Hulk, Les gave him a cape and added a comet logo on his tunic. "That'll shut them up," Les was reported to have said, referring to Marvel.

How did Fields think he could get away with such a brazen end-run on another company's characters? After all, swiping characters was as old as comics themselves, but never to this degree. Could even Les Fields be this clueless? Barry recounts that Les was convinced that Lee and Goodman had been so busy with the line that they had forgotten to register their characters. I asked Barry if anyone had stopped to notice the trademark and copyright notices on the Marvel books. "Oh sure," Barry says, "Les commented on that every time we looked at a Marvel book." And? "Les was hoping that they were just bluffing."

Marvel tried to slap an injunction on all of Wonderful's books but at least one issue of each title was already at the distributors. Marvel still was reliant on National's deal with the distributor and couldn't appeal to them to fight the knockoffs.

THOR, I AM CALLING ON THE ATOMIC PHONE TO WARN YOU OF GREAT DANGER ON MAPLE STREET!
I MUST OBEY MY FATHER ME-OW!! I CALL ON THE POWERS OF THOR!
HERE I GO TO FIGHT DANGER AND CRIME!
I AM LOKI, EVIL BROTHER OF THOR! I NOW SERVE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM!
THOR! YOU ARE TOO LATE! I WILL MAKE YOU MY SLAVE!

Loki fights Thor on behalf of the Red Menace-from Thor #1(Oct 1966).

But help came from an even more powerful quarter than Independent News. "The news dealers were just swamped with comics that summer" says Barry. "Everyone and their mother was publishing a comic. Most of them could get something on the stands, but apparently a lot of dealers would take one look at our books, decide they weren't salable, and send them back without even racking them." To this day, Les denies this. "The kids loved the books. They were more intelligent and enjoyable than any of our competitors. It was Marvel's spies and agents provocateurs who'd go across the country and return our books before the shopkeepers even saw them." When I asked how kids could enjoy books that they hadn't even seen, Les replied, "See, you're buying into the Marvel line. That's how effective their smear campaign was!"

The printing bills and book returns did what Martin Goodman's lawyers couldn't. Fields American was already hopelessly in debt, and after two short months of existence, Wonderful Comics was no more. Barry and Hy showed up to the office one day and Les was nowhere to be found. They called his apartment and no one answered, not even Mitzi, who was always home. They feared the worst. Had the Mob finally got their revenge on Les? They filed a missing persons report out and waited. Finally in 1969, Barry received a telegram from Les. He was down in Mexico, having fled his creditors. Mitzi had gone back to her mother in Schenectady. Les stated that was a "real drag. -stop," but now Les was "crashing" with "some really groovy people. -stop."

It wasn't until 1982 that an older, tanner Les Fields returned from Mexico to New York. He moved around in bottom-feeder publishing circles until he became eligible for SSI. He moved into a SRO house and worked to re-establish contact with his son, now a successful Wall Street lawyer. (His son declined to be interviewed for this article and asked that his name not be used.) Les was stricken with earlobe cancer in 1985 and has lived ever since in a nursing home. But his mind is still sharp. On my third and final interview with his we discussed some of the legal wrangles with Marvel.

"Marvel played dirty," Fields claims, 'They hit below the belt. They were threatened by Wonderful. We were the young upstarts and suddenly they were the establishment." To this day Fields claims that Lee and Kirby; ripped him off, not the other way around. "Goodman was a skinflint, he paid those boys peanuts and they made him millions. They would come every afternoon to my office, and I would give them whatever work I could to help feed their families."

Fields told me that he gets calls every week from "hot-shots from California" who want to revive the Wonderful line, but Fields proclaims, "Leave it in the past. Mexico taught me a lot of things, and one lesson I learned was not to beat a sleeping dog." He's not bitter anymore. "Some things were not meant to be," he says, scanning my face for reaction.

Fields still feels that characters like the Monster were unique ("totally different from the Hulk. I mean he had a cape, OK?") and insists to this day Daddy LongLegs wasn't legally actionable by Marvel. "Spider-Man or whatever they called him was the Web Slinger, right?"

"Yes," I replied, somewhat confused.

"Don't you get it?" said Fields, his face frozen in an expectant, conspiratorial smile.

"Umm, not really," I offered.

Fields shook his head, disgusted by my apparent stupidity. "Daddy Longlegs don't make webs and spiders do."

"Oh… okay" I replied. "Then why did he have a web design on his costume?"

Fields looked somewhat dumbfounded by this. He then rang for the nurse.

The foregoing was—believe it or not—a work of fiction, by a very talented writer and artist, Chris Knowles. Gary and I were both fooled and loved it, and now knowing all—we love it even more! Thanks, Chris! And... April Fools!!(Pat S. Calhoun)

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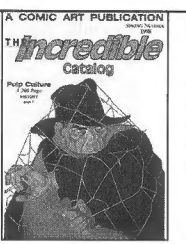

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Comic book companies are so numerous now that we take this diversity totally for granted. However, few realize that in the fabled "Silver Age of Comics" the entire Comic Book Industry was controlled by a handful of publishers, Marvel, National, Dell, Archie, Gold Key, Harvey and Charlton commanded the lion's share of the Industry and the few intrepid souls who sporadically rose up to challenge their dominance were usually driven out of the business. We know about Tower, Belmont, Wham-O and the immortal Myron Fass but lost in the pages of time is a comic book publisher whose existence was so brief even the most exacting comics historians don't include it in their work. Neither do any of their titles register in any comics price guides.

In 1966, a short-lived line of comics hit the stands. They were published under the "Wonderful Comics" masthead, and each bore a banner declaring "The Dawn of the Wonderful Age of Comic Magazines!" The entire contents of these comics were credited to a certain Les Fields, whose work in the comic field had been previously unheralded. Fields was also listed as editor and publisher of the comics in the masthead and Wonderful Comics was legally known as "Fields American Publishing." Who was this modern day renaissance man? And why had no one in the comics field heard of him?

I certainly hadn't until very recently, when I was helping my uncle clean out his house in Yonkers. He and his (second) wife were moving to a retirement village in Florida and all the accumulated junk in the attic and garage had to be taken to the dump. At the end of a particularly grueling day of cleaning, my uncle handed me an old wooden fruit box. He said to me, "Hey, you still like them god-damned funny-books, right? Here, see if any of these are worth anything. If they are you give me half. And don't you hold out on me, you little shit." Exhausted, I threw the box into the trunk of my car and told him I would check them out later.

The following evening I sorted through the shredded, yellowing mess of old *Heckyl and Jeckyl* and *Little Dot* comics. It was like sorting through a pile of body parts after a plane-crash. But something caught my eye. I kept seeing fragments of strange superhero drawings, some that resembled early '60's Marvel characters as interpreted by the mentally challenged. In the pile of tatters I caught names like "Metal Master" and Mortarman." And lo and behold, at the bottom of the pile were several (relatively) intact copies of books like the *Thrilling Three, Metal Master,* and most remarkably, *Thor*.

I immediately looked up these titles in my price guide, but there was no record of any of them. I asked around and no one else had heard of them either. I forgot all about it until one day my uncle called me again. "So, what's the deal with them funny-books?" he asked. I told him they were worthless and he went ballistic, accusing me of ripping him off. I offered to send them back to him and he simmered down. Before he hung up, he casually mentioned that one of his neighbors used to be in the "funny-book" business, too. I asked him his name and he said "Barry Fields."

I was stunned. This was an amazing case of synchronicity. I pestered my uncle for Barry Fields' number. I called Barry and lo and behold, this was the brother and partner of the elusive Les Fields! And what's more the Fields' former assistant, Hy Gold, also lived in the same community as Barry and my uncle. I asked what happened to Les and Barry paused. After he cleared his throat, Barry offered, "He's, um, in a home, up near you somewhere." After a long and expensive series of telephone interviews with Barry Fields and Hy Gold, and finally a face to face interview with Les Fields himself, I was able to piece together the full story of this brief but tortured episode in comics history.

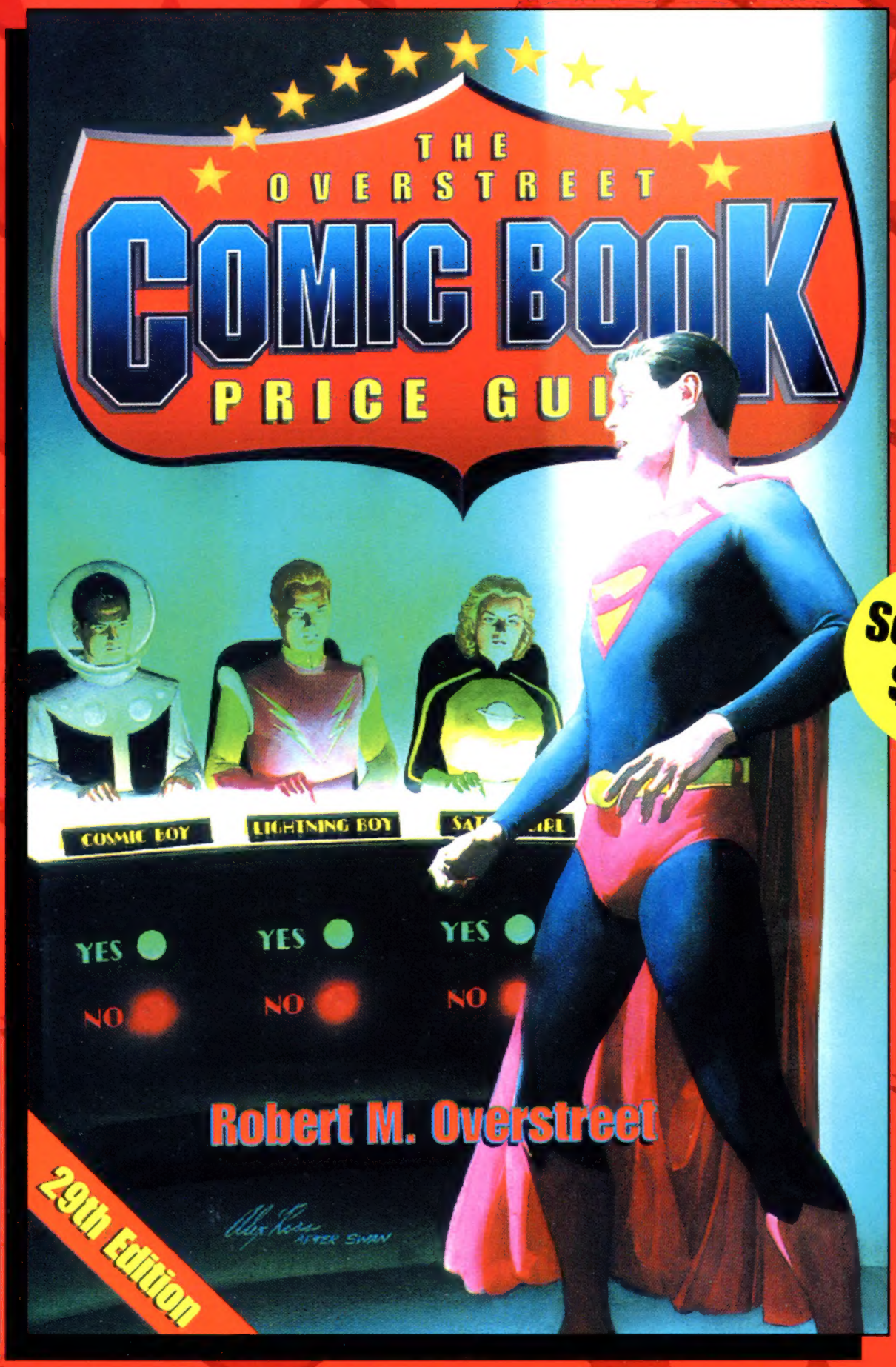
Les Fields was no publishing novice. His father had left him a small publishing business, Fields American, complete with a dingy office on Broadway and 35th. His father published mostly religious interest magazines for the local immigrant communities of the 1920s and '30s. *(Continued on page 76)*

(LEFT TO RIGHT) 1. Concept art for the "Astounding Daddy LongLegs Man;" 2. "Metal Master," Fields used capes to distinguish Wonderful characters from their Marvel Comics' sources; 3. The blatantly plagiaristic "Thrilling Three;" and 4. The deliriously stupid "Thor." Fields basically took Marvel's character, cut his hair and took away his cape. (Artists unknown, art courtesy of Hy Gold.)

Les Fields and the Wonderful Age of Comics

An Appreciation of a Forgotten Comics Master

By
Chris Knowles



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